Seeking Buddho



Ajahn Anan Akiñcano

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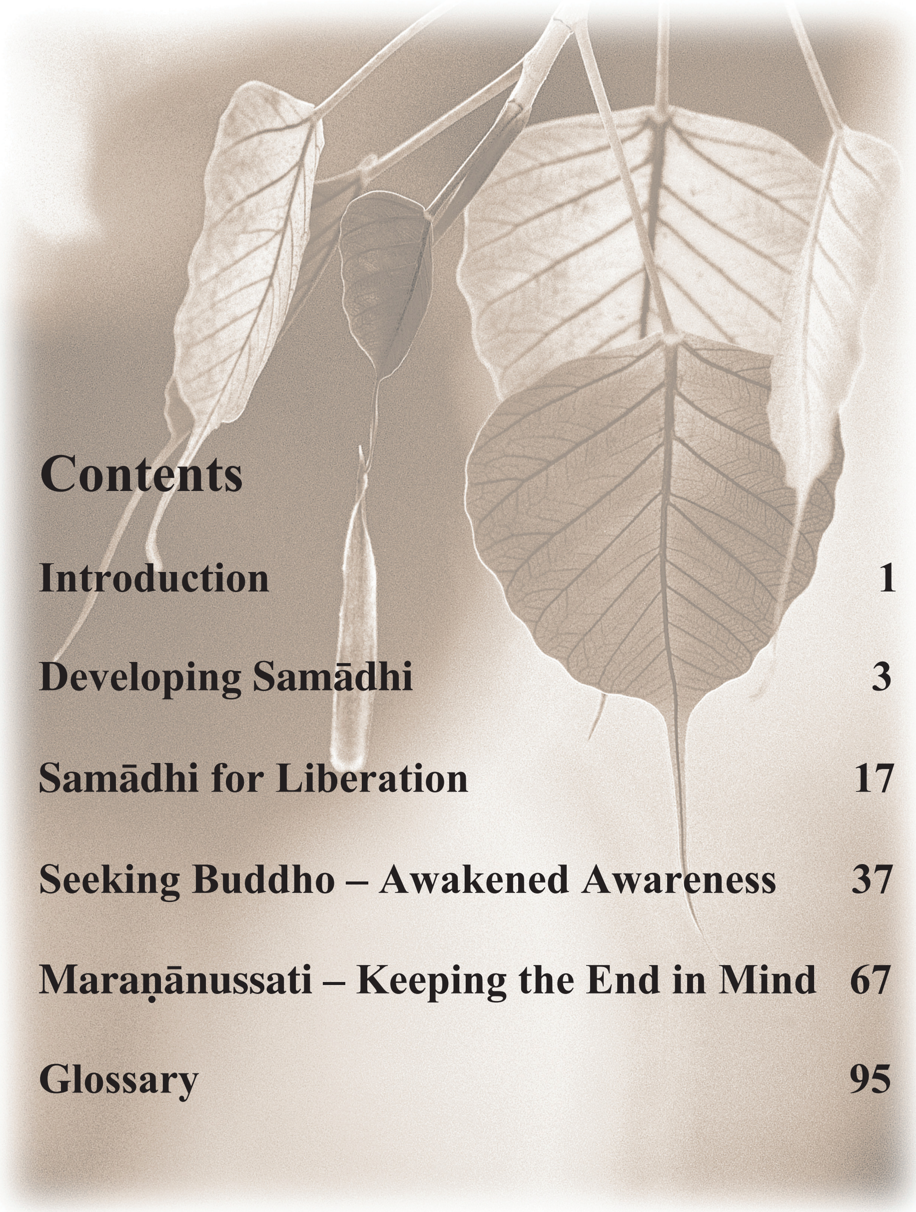
Teachings and Reflections
by
Ajahn Anan Akiñcano

Translated from the Thai by Paññānando Bhikkhu

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Translators Introduction

This book aims to serve as an introduction to the Dhamma teachings of Venerable Ajahn Anan Akiñcano. These teachings provide both a guide to the fundamentals of meditation practice and also an overview of the entire Noble Path from beginning to end. Both these aspects stress not only the development of samādhi and wisdom, but also the cultivation of other essential virtues such as generosity, patience, loving kindness and moral discipline that together emphasise the integrated and harmonious nature of the Buddhist path.

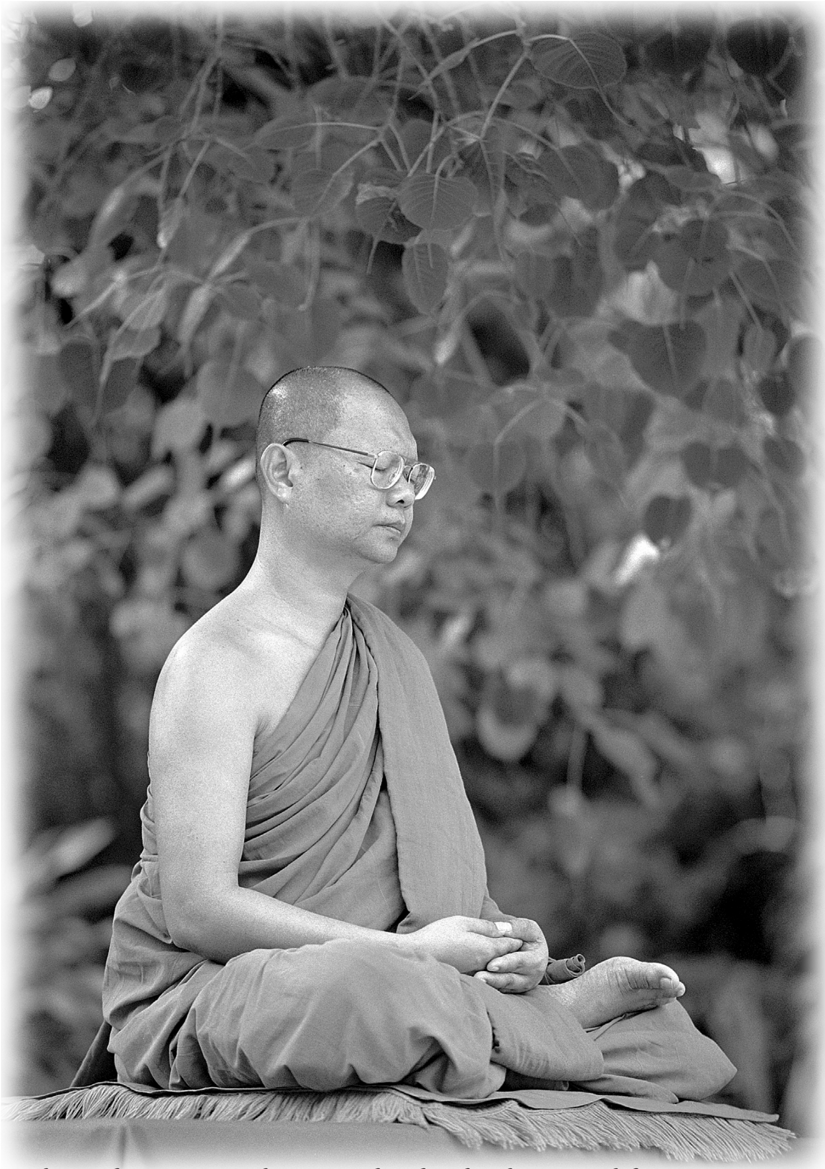
Ajahn Anan is a distinguished first generation disciple of Venerable Ajahn Chah Bodhiñāṇa Thera (1919-1992), who was a spiritual mentor and 'teacher of teachers' revered throughout the Buddhist world and one of the most influential Theravādan bhikkhus of recent times, both inside and outside his native Thailand. After the passing away of Ajahn Chah, who was affectionately called Luang Pu or Venerable Grandfather, it seemed natural that Ajahn Anan, as an accomplished student of this celebrated Master, should begin to exert a similar influence over a new generation of Buddhists, who look towards him for guidance and inspiration.

The teachings contained within this book were originally extemporaneous talks delivered to mixed audiences of both monastics and laity without any formal planning in advance, as is the style of meditation teachers in Thai forest monasteries. Pāli, the scriptural language of Theravāda Buddhism, is used sparingly in the first two talks and often the meanings of those terms used are explained in the

text anyway or can be inferred from the context. However, in later talks these Pāli terms are employed much more freely with the hope that they will deepen readers understanding of spiritual practice. With this end in mind, a comprehensive glossary is included at the back of the book. Often the effort to penetrate the meaning of these terms can instil a sense of faith and wonder at the profundity of the Buddha's teachings, and guide one's practice of meditation towards their realisation. Indeed, the Pāli language serves no other purpose than to clarify the path of spiritual development in a coherent and systematic way. Used as such, the Pāli language, like any other tool, can greatly enhance one's understanding and ability to succeed at the task in hand, in this case, the liberation of the heart from all suffering and stress.

Developing Samādhi

A guide to the fundamentals of meditation by
Venerable Ajahn Anan Akiñcano.



"Ordinarily, our mind is ceaselessly thinking and fantasising. To halt this flow of mental proliferation we need to practise meditation."

When sitting in meditation we assume a posture that feels just right, one that is balanced and relaxed. We should lean neither too far left nor too far right, neither too far forward nor too far back. The head should be neither raised nor drooping and the eyes should be closed just enough that we don't feel tense and uptight. We then focus awareness upon the sensation of breathing at three points: the end of the nose, the heart and the navel. We focus awareness, *firstly*, on following the in-breath as it passes these three points – beginning at the nose, descending through the heart and finishing at the navel – and then, *secondly*, on following the out-breath in reverse order – starting at the navel, ascending through the heart and ending at the tip of the nose. This preliminary means of focusing awareness can be called 'following the breath at three points'.

Once we are mindful of the in-and-out breathing and proficient at focusing awareness on these three points, then we continue by clearly knowing the in-breaths and out-breaths just at the tip of the nose. We maintain awareness of the sensation of breathing by focusing on only the end of the nose.

Sometimes, as we focus on the breathing, the mind wanders off thinking and fantasising about the past or the future, and so we have to put forth effort to maintain this present moment awareness of the breath. If the mind is wandering so much that we cannot focus our awareness, then we should breathe in deeply, filling the lungs to maximum capacity before exhaling. We should inhale and exhale deeply like this three times and then start breathing normally again. As

the in-breath passes the nose we count, ‘one’; as it passes the heart, ‘two’; the navel, ‘three’. With the out-breath we count ‘one’ as it moves up from the belly, ‘two’ as it passes the heart area, and ‘three’ at the nose-tip. We should count in this way until we are skilled and proficient. This is the first method of focusing awareness upon the breathing.

Alternatively, we can focus our awareness using the second method of ‘counting in pairs’. We count ‘one’ as we breathe in and ‘one’ as we breathe out. With the next in-breath we count, ‘two’, and with the out-breath, ‘two’. Then, in – ‘three’, out – ‘three’; in – ‘four’, out – ‘four’; in – ‘five’, out – ‘five’. Firstly, we count in pairs of in-and-out breaths up to ‘five’. After the fifth pair we start again at ‘one’ and increase the count of in-and-out breaths one pair at a time, for example: in-out, ‘one’; in-out, ‘two’; in-out, ‘three’; in-out, ‘four’; in-out, ‘five’; in-out, ‘six’. After counting each new pair of in-and-out breaths we start again at ‘one’ and increase the pairs incrementally up to ‘ten’. Using this method we will be aware of whether our mindfulness is with the counting – totalling the numbers correctly – or whether it is distracted and confused.

When competent at counting the breaths, we will see that the breathing is perceived with increased clarity. The rate of counting can now increase in speed as follows: with the in-breath we count, ‘one-two-three-four-five’, and with the out-breath, ‘one-two-three-four-five’. When proficient at counting up to five like this, we can increase the number to six: breathing in count, ‘one-two-three-four-five-six’, and breathing out count, ‘one-two-three-four-five-six’. Alternatively we can continue counting up to ‘five', whichever feels more comfortable. We can experiment to see whether counting up to five is enough to hold our attention or not. If we cannot remain mindful and wander off into thoughts, then we should count rapidly on the in-

breath, 'one-two-three-four-five', and similarly on the out-breath, 'one-two-three-four-five'. We should count in this way until we become skilled and proficient. Eventually, we will become aware that the mind has let go of the counting all by itself and feels comfortable knowing the in-and-out breathing just at the tip of the nose. This can be described as a mind brought to peace through the method of counting in pairs.

If meditating at home, we begin by reciting the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. We can recollect these qualities by chanting the daily devotions to the Triple Gem either in full or in brief. We then generate thoughts of loving kindness directed firstly towards ourselves, reciting the verse, 'May I abide in well-being'. We then spread these thoughts of loving kindness to include all beings: 'May they be happy and free from suffering; may they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained'. We focus next upon knowing the in-breaths and out-breaths at the three points, or according to the method of counting in pairs, as has already been explained.

We establish mindfulness by focusing awareness completely upon counting breaths. When mindfulness has been properly established, then the heart will be continuously aware of the process of counting, recollecting nothing else, especially those mental objects conducive to sensual desire, ill-will, sloth & torpor, restlessness & agitation and doubt. When mindfulness has been properly established, these Five Hindrances do not arise. Concentration then becomes firmer and samādhi arises, characterised by a momentary peacefulness of mind called khaṇika samādhi. This is only a slightly concentrated state of mind.

If we are focused in samādhi with continuous mindfulness, then sometimes the state known as pīti will arise. Pīti is characterised by

physical sensations of coolness or of a rapturous energy thrilling throughout the body – like waves breaking on the shore – which can cause the body to sway and the hair to stand on end. These sensations are accompanied by mental perceptions of physical expansiveness. When mindful awareness is focused continuously, it can seem that the hands and feet have vanished. The feelings in other areas of the body, even the sensation of the whole body itself, can likewise entirely disappear from consciousness. The body feels completely tranquil. During this period that the heart is peaceful, the mind temporarily lets go of its attachment to the physical body and consequently mind and body feel light and tranquil. As we sit in meditation and this tranquillity increases, it can seem as though we are floating in space, giving rise to feelings of happiness and well-being. At this point we can say that the power of our concentration has deepened to the level of upacāra samādhi.

As samādhi deepens further, the heart experiences even greater rapture and bliss together with feelings of profound inner strength and stability. All thoughts completely cease and the mind becomes utterly still and one-pointed. At this stage we cannot control or direct the meditation. The heart follows its natural course, entering a unified state with only a single object of consciousness[1]. This is the unification of mind in samādhi; the heart has been stilled and brought to singleness.

Each of these levels of peace provide us with inner strength; they empower the heart for developing wisdom. When we contemplate the body through the modest peacefulness of khaṇika samādhi for example, then we will gain a modest degree of insight. Through investigation, we will clearly see that this body is impermanent. We

[1] ekaggatārammaṇa

can contemplate the nature of the body right from its beginnings. How did it look at conception? What was it like in the womb? We can consider the body's appearance as a child, gradually growing and maturing but always inconstant and changing. The sense organs – the eyes, the ears, the nose, tongue and physical body – gradually deteriorate with age along with the faculties of seeing, hearing and so on. When degeneration sets in to a greater degree, we say that the body is old. It then becomes sick and eventually dies.

When samādhi is strong then the heart is strong, capable of contemplating and clearly seeing the physical body as impermanent. The deeper the samādhi is, then the deeper the insight into impermanence. We clearly see the truth of the Buddha's teaching, that the body is anicca – dukkha – anattā; inconstant, stressful and neither a self nor a soul. At this stage we are possessed of the deepest type of wisdom; we see the truth with a clarity that is neither questionable nor dubious.

There are three levels of wisdom and understanding. The first of these is the understanding acquired through learning or the wisdom which results from listening to and studying the teachings of the Buddha. The second level of wisdom arises through contemplation and investigation of the truth. The third and deepest level of wisdom is acquired through the practice of meditation. This is the wisdom that arises from a peaceful heart and sees things according to reality[2].

We practise mindfulness of breathing to make the heart peaceful. We can count breaths or use the additional mantra 'Buddho'; internally reciting 'Bud –' with the in-breath and '– dho' on the out-breath.

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[2] These three levels of wisdom are known as suttamayapaññā, cintamayapaññā and bhāvanāmayapaññā.

When the heart is calm and concentrated, we can use the power of this samādhi for investigation because, even with momentary concentration, the mind is supple and at the stage where it can clearly contemplate the physical body and the mind, whether feelings, perceptions, mental formations or consciousness. When memories and perceptions arise for example, we can see that they are clouded and hazy, like a murky and overcast sky, incapable of penetrating to things as they actually are. Thoughts and mental formations are sometimes wholesome, sometimes unwholesome or else neutral, neither one nor the other. These saṅkhāras have no abiding essence at all.

Consciousness refers to the awareness of knowing, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. There are six classes of consciousness – based on these six senses[3] – arising and ceasing in succession. While listening to the Dhamma for example, if the ear and the faculty of hearing are normal and unimpaired, then we can hear what is being said. If this sensory apparatus has deteriorated, then the hearing will not be clear. Hearing therefore, is dependant upon sounds making contact with the ear and the faculty of hearing being in a healthy state. When we hear sounds there is also the awareness of 'hearing'; the mind is conscious of hearing sounds. However, we attach to this awareness and identify with the hearing as one's self, that is, 'I hear' or 'hearing belongs to me'.

The process of hearing is dependant upon many causes and conditions. If there are no sounds, then there is no experience of hearing. If there is no contact between the ears and sounds, then likewise, there is no experience of hearing. If the faculty of hearing is impaired, then we feel that we haven't heard properly. Therefore, when there are sounds, the faculty of hearing is unimpaired and there

[3] Mind is the sixth sense.

is contact between these sounds and the auditory sense base, then consequently ear consciousness arises and hearing takes place. The same is true of the other senses.

Without exception, all these six classes of consciousness that arise by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are merely types of elements[4]. If our heart is peaceful, then we will see all these types of consciousness as just elements arising and ceasing, without a self or soul. In reality, the self is like a conjuror's trick arising and passing away at the six sense doors. However, the mind that lacks the inner strength of wisdom grasps onto the body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness, and identifies with them as one's self. This attachment causes suffering to arise. When we have brought the heart to peace however, wisdom and the clear understanding that is called vipassanā arises, enabling us to abandon this sense of self.

Therefore, in the beginning, it is essential that we practise meditation. We must train ourselves in present moment awareness in all postures using a preliminary meditation object to focus and guide our heart. Practising this way will greatly strengthen our mindfulness. We should put forth effort to observe our mind and feelings continuously. When there is contact between the senses and their objects – the eyes and forms, the ears and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and flavours, the body and physical sensations, the mind and mind-objects – we must mindfully contemplate how these sense objects effect our heart. The one who guards and cares for their heart will be liberated from all suffering.

We must look after our heart with mindfulness otherwise it will just grasp onto every object of consciousness, creating a sense of self. The

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[4] e.g. ear-consciousness element (sotaviññāṇadhātu)

untrained heart lacks the wisdom to see that this attachment causes suffering. Nobody wants to suffer but through this attachment to the objects of consciousness, stress and discontent always arise. Therefore, we have to train our heart following the way of the Buddha, who exhorted us to be mindful at all times, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down.

Focusing awareness on the in-and-out breathing is also a form of mindfulness practice called ānāpānasati – mindfulness of breathing. Every day we can focus our awareness through this practice for thirty minutes or, if we have more energy, for forty-five minutes or even for an hour. Whenever we have time, we should try to practise mindfulness until it becomes firm and focused continuously. When we are accomplished in mindfulness, concentration and wisdom arise.

Whenever we are mindful, we are perfecting the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. Right Effort means striving to develop mindfulness in the present moment, abandoning the past and the future. Right Effort also includes the effort to prevent unwholesome mental states from arising in the mind and the effort to evoke and maintain wholesome, skilful qualities. The factors of Right Mindfulness and Right Samādhi are also developed with and through the factor of Right Effort.

As for those aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path concerning moral conduct, such as Right Speech for example, these are also developed through the practice of mindfully sitting and walking in meditation. While in meditation, our actions of body and speech are focused in a wholesome way and we are engaged in an activity that is skilful and pure, in accordance with Right Livelihood.

By contemplating the hindrances to meditation, such as restlessness, and also reflecting upon how suffering is caused through attachment,

we are developing the Path factors of wisdom, that is, Right View together with the Right Aspiration to be free from suffering once and for all. Therefore, all the components of the Noble Eightfold Path, or in short, sīla – samādhi – paññā, are perfected through the practice of meditation because while practising meditation, we are simultaneously developing all eight factors of the Path.

Mindfulness can also be developed through walking meditation. We should walk with composure, the hands clasped lightly in front, right over left. The head should be neither raised too high nor hung too low. The eyes should be focused forward to an even distance and stray neither left nor right, neither behind nor too far ahead. While walking back and forth, we coordinate the movement of our feet with the mantra, 'Buddho'. As we step forward, leading with the right foot, we internally recite 'Bud –' and with the left foot, '– dho'.

Luang Pu Chah taught that while walking in meditation, we must be aware of the beginning, middle and end of the path. While reciting 'Bud –' with the right foot and '– dho' with the left, we should also fix our mindfulness on knowing our movements in relation to these three points along the path, that is, as we begin, as we pass the middle and as we reach the end. Upon reaching the end of the path, we stop and establish mindfulness anew before turning around and walking back reciting, 'Bud – dho', 'Bud – dho', 'Bud – dho' as before.

Focusing upon the activity of walking while pacing to-and-fro is called 'caṅkama'[5] or 'walking meditation'. We can adjust our practice of walking meditation according to time and place. If space allows, we can establish a walking path twenty-five paces long. If there is less room than this, we can reduce the number of paces and walk more

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[5] (Thai) jong-grom

slowly. While practising walking meditation however, we should walk neither too fast nor too slow.

When listening to others, we can also focus on reciting ‘Buddho’ in our heart while mindfully noting that we are listening. We should strive to be mindful whatever our activity, be it sitting, talking or listening. Luang Pu Chah greatly stressed the practice of mindfulness. When the heart is peaceful, we can turn to the contemplation of the physical body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness. We will see that these Five Aggregates merely arise, exist briefly and then completely pass away. There is no real, abiding self or soul or person or being or ‘me’ or ‘you’ to be found.

Although the Lord Buddha is referred to as the Enlightened One, He taught that we should not identify with this knowledge of the truth. Nevertheless, we can listen to and investigate the teachings without understanding that we shouldn’t attach to our knowledge and insight. Because we still have self view and the desire to identify with our experience, we can become confused about how to proceed. The Lord Buddha taught that even with knowledge and a clear understanding of the truth, we should recognize this knowledge as being simply Dhamma arising, establishing itself and then passing away. The completely pure heart then arises.

As we develop mindfulness, we can see that sometimes the heart is possessed by greed, hatred and delusion. Recognising this, we should also be aware that this is just the nature of the unenlightened mind. It is also just the nature of the mind to be, at times, without these defilements. The mind that is sometimes wholesome, sometimes unwholesome, sometimes bright, concentrated, blissful, calm and wise is also just the mind as it is, according to its nature, and not to be clung to as ‘me’ or ‘mine’. The mind is just the mind, not a self or soul or

person or being or 'me' or 'you'. Even this knowledge however, should be let go of. This insight that body and mind are not-self is called wisdom, but wisdom too must be let go of and relinquished. By training our heart this way, it becomes peaceful, pure and radiant. The mind that has been well trained naturally brings happiness.

The untrained mind is a danger; it has no refuge and out of ignorance, continuously races along with its moods and desires. However, the mind that has been properly trained brings us happiness. Most of us have already received an education or some kind of training and are knowledgeable in the various arts and sciences of the world. However, we have to further train our minds to be peaceful and to recognise the danger of being immoral and undisciplined. We have to keep our actions of body and speech within the bounds of virtue and see the danger in the hindering defilements of desire and aversion, cruelty, ill-will, doubt, agitation and restlessness.

As we learn to see the harmful consequences of such mental states, we develop loving kindness, aspiring towards the happiness of ourselves and others, freed from hatred and ill-will. Initially we cultivate loving kindness towards ourselves and those we love, such as our mother and father, and then we extend these benevolent thoughts to include beings everywhere. Through the cultivation of loving kindness we sleep well and our heart is peaceful. We then turn towards the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind and mind-objects[6], seeing that these things are just that – body, feelings, mind and mind-objects – nothing more. They are neither a self nor a soul nor a person nor a being nor 'me' nor you'. Wisdom then arises and suffering steadily diminishes.

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[6] The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Therefore, we must train and develop our hearts. If we do not train ourselves in this life, then we'll leave the world empty-handed. We have to study this physical body; it is born, gradually ages and eventually dies. It is evident therefore, that only suffering lays ahead, not happiness. Old age, sickness and death are waiting for us. At present we may not be aware of this process of degeneration, but later on it will become obvious. Our eyesight, hearing and physical strength will deteriorate. Some people have a long life but eventually they die of old age. When the body reaches its end and can no longer sustain itself, then we call this 'dying of old age'. When the body is at the point where it can just keel over and die, then we say it has reached old age. When very old, the body sickens and when very sick, it dies.

At present we are still physically strong and can sit and walk in meditation with ease. We can practise mindfulness easily and should therefore, strive to train ourselves. Training the mind in meditation is much more meritorious than practising generosity and observing precepts. Therefore, whether living at home or in a monastery, we should put forth effort to train ourselves according to the methods that have been explained here. We should train our hearts in peace and then contemplate the truth to bring forth wisdom. We will then realise the fruits of practising Dhamma.

Samādhi for Liberation

A Dhamma desanā by Venerable Ajahn Anan Akiñcano explaining the complementary roles of samādhi and wisdom in the practice of freeing the heart



When the heart has been brought to peace through repetition of the mantra 'Buddho' in conjunction with the in-and-out breathing, then we no longer need to maintain this mantra in mind. With the heart at ease, peaceful and still, we can just simply be aware of the breath coming in and the breath going out.

When the heart is peaceful and still, various physical sensations will manifest within. Sometimes we may feel that the body is expanding as we sit, filling the whole room or meditation hall. The body can seem to enlarge so much that we feel it is touching the ceiling. We might also feel tingling sensations or waves of rapturous energy thrilling throughout the body, causing the hair to stand on end. If this rapture – or pīti – is strong, the body can seem light or weightless as if it were floating in space. With this experience of pīti, the body feels light and tranquil; the mind peaceful and still.

This experience of momentary peacefulness, where the mind has entered a slightly concentrated state, is called khaṇika samādhi, or momentary samādhi. If this state of tranquillity lasts longer, for example, five, ten, fifteen or even thirty minutes, then the heart enters a deeper state of peace called upacāra samādhi. This is a state of concentration that is 'neighbouring' or on the verge of entering the total stillness and serenity of jhāna.

When the heart settles into the peace of upacāra samādhi through practising mindfulness of breathing, there is an awareness of inner calm and stillness. At this level of concentration the mind is not yet

completely still. It can be compared to the pendulum of clock swinging slightly to the left and right. There's a slight amount of mental activity and a modicum of thinking but mostly the mind is peaceful. This movement of the mind is the activity of vitakka and vicāra towards the meditation object. Vitakka is the initial application of the mind that takes up or focuses upon the sensation of breathing and vicāra is the sustained activity of keeping the breath in mind.

Feelings of pīti and sukha – rapture and bliss – also arise in upacāra samādhi. In upacāra samādhi one is saturated in sukha, characterised by feelings of internal strength and stability. Sukha can be distinguished from pīti by the deep contentment it generates. However profound pīti may be, unlike the experience of sukha, it doesn't induce feelings of inner contentment. When this experience of sukha becomes very powerful, there is no longer any movement of the mind. It rests within, peaceful and still, no longer 'swinging left and right'. Even if we want the mind the think, it doesn't. There is no longer any interest in external things. The mind no longer registers sense impressions; it has no concern for external experience. The mind will not go out and impressions from the outside won't reach in. No thoughts arise at this stage. The activity of vitakka and vicāra is not on the level of thinking. Only a little pīti remains. As pīti and sukha become more distinct, the mind becomes more peaceful. With this attainment of inner stillness, the mind enters a state of unification or one-pointedness called ekaggatā. The five conditioning factors for the realisation of full absorption – vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha and ekaggatā – have now been brought to completion and the mind enters First Jhāna. I will only explain up to here for now.

Vitakka is usually understood to mean thinking, but this is not the case. Vitakka is the initial activity of 'taking up' or focusing on the meditation object, such as the breath. Outside the context of

meditation practice, vicāra also implies thinking and mental proliferation. In the practice of mindfulness of breathing however, vicāra is the activity of staying single-mindedly with the breath, maintaining a constant awareness as it comes in and out, without straying to other matters[1]. Vicāra keeps up this constant, unwavering focus until the heart becomes peaceful and possessed of pīti, sukha and ekaggatā.

When we are skilled and proficient in the practice of mindfulness of breathing, then the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will naturally be brought to perfection. Mindfulness of breathing is the king of all meditation methods and its frequent practice and cultivation brings great fruit and benefits. Sometimes we may use other methods of meditation and these bring results in the same way; pīti arises leading to khaṇika samādhi and so on. For example, we can recollect the virtues of the Buddha as our theme of meditation. We can recite the verses from the daily devotional chanting, recollecting that the Buddha is the Supremely Enlightened One, who is pure and free from defilement, self-attained and possessing the boundless virtues of purity, loving kindness and great compassion. If we devote our hearts to these reflections, then pīti will arise. The state where pīti arises in momentary flashes can be called khaṇika samādhi, and if pīti is sustained for a longer period of time, the experience can be called upacāra samādhi.

The Ten Recollections are themes of reflective meditation that include the recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha and the contemplation of death. These reflective meditations are capable of

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[1] This point is emphasised because in common Thai usage wi-tok (vitakka) and wi-jarn (vicāra) have acquired different meanings from their technical usage, which even imply unwholesome mental activity e.g. worry and critical appraisal. The point being made here is that in the context of meditation, vitakka and vicāra are wholesome applications of the mind.

bringing results to the level of upacāra samādhi. However, as they imply thinking, these contemplations cannot lead the mind into jhāna although they do provide a good foundation for it. If we practise these reflective meditations, then the power of concentration will grow by itself. However, by practising mindfulness of breathing or the contemplation of the elements, it is possible for the mind to become peaceful and unified.

Having realised the state of unified awareness, the mind then withdraws from this deep concentration back to the level of upacāra samādhi. We should then take up the practice of body contemplation. We can contemplate the hair, nails, teeth and skin of the body according to our Preceptor's instructions during the ordination ceremony. Lay people can also take up any of the thirty-two parts of the body for contemplation. We investigate the body to realise its nature as mere elements shifting and changing according to causes and conditions. The body is neither a self nor a soul, neither a person nor a being, neither 'me' nor 'you'. Reflecting in this way, we are developing kāyagatā satipaṭṭhāna – body contemplation; that is, the First Foundation of Mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness of breathing is also included within the First Foundation of Mindfulness as is the meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body, the ten cemetery contemplations, the investigation of the elements and mindfulness of body postures and activities, such as coming and going, sitting and standing, walking and talking, drinking and thinking, looking behind and looking ahead, working and lying down.

When developing the First Foundation, mindfulness must always be focused within the body and must not be allowed to wander in other directions. As we become more skilled in keeping awareness within the body through the practice of mindfulness of breathing, then we will gain the strength of mind to focus on other aspects of body

contemplation, such as those given in the summary of the First Foundation of Mindfulness just mentioned. We will realise that the body is merely a body; neither a self nor soul nor person nor being nor ‘me’ nor ‘you’.

Usually we relate to the physical body as a person or being, as our self or their self. Contemplating this matter however, we might suddenly realise, ‘If I breathe in but don’t breathe out, or breathe out but don’t breathe in, then the body will die in accordance with its nature’. If our mind is peaceful and concentrated, we will clearly see the truth that this body really isn’t a self or soul or person or being or ‘me’ or ‘you’. With this insight, the heart becomes disentangled from the sense of self. The body is seen as one thing and the mind as another, both completely different from each other – different aspects of nature. At that moment, through clarity of insight, wisdom arises and upādāna is abandoned; the attachment to the body as self is uprooted. This realisation arises through meditation[2] and is the highest manifestation of wisdom.

Wisdom initially comes from listening to and studying the teachings regarding not-self. After thinking and reflecting further, we accept not-self as theory but have not yet realised this truth directly for ourselves. However, as we practise samādhi and then contemplate the truth with a serene and silent mind, clear insight arises. We previously took this body to be our self, but through insight we clearly see that this is not the case. The heart lets go of attachment to the body and uproots greed, hatred and delusion.

It is the mind that is still and peaceful to the level of one-pointedness that sees deeply into not-self. If our contemplation of not-self is based

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[2] bhāvanāmayapaññā

on other levels of samādhi (without the empowerment of jhāna), then although we also gain insight, the realisation of not-self and the experience of letting go is not as deep or profound. In other words, although we can also use the power of khaṇika or upacāra samādhi to let go of our attachment to conscious experience by seeing it as impermanent, stressful and not-self, this letting go will only be on the level of khaṇika or upacāra samādhi. Therefore, the deeper the samādhi, the deeper the insight will be. After the realisation of one-pointed concentration, the mind withdraws to the level of upacāra samādhi. If we then contemplate the body based on this upacāra samādhi that has been empowered by the attainment of jhāna, we will clearly see the truth and let go of attachment.

The Buddha stated that those possessing the inner strength to reach this stage through much meditation and spiritual development, will certainly see the Dhamma and receive the fruits of practice within seven years or seven months or seven days[3]. If our mind has reached the state of one-pointedness and we practise body contemplation, we are sure to see the Dhamma and be transformed from just ordinary, good people to Noble Ones.

In the beginning it is essential to develop samādhi because it provides our heart with inner strength. If our practice bears little fruit, it is because our mind lacks this inner strength and stability; these qualities have not yet arisen within the heart. In addition to this, our sense of restraint is not yet fully developed. We need restraint and heedfulness to guard the mind and keep it focused within. If we practise in this way, the mind starts to experience the stillness of

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[3] This statement can be found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhīma Nikāya (MN 10).

samādhi. This is the method of the 'insight meditator'[4]. They develop just enough samādhi for the mind to be peaceful and then, through contemplation, abandon clinging attachment. Realisation of enlightenment together with the Three Knowledges[5] requires a more advanced method of practice with much deeper samādhi; twice as deep as before. With the increased power of Second Jhāna, after withdrawing back through First Jhāna to upacāra samādhi, the depth of contemplation is far more profound than previous . . . but let's leave this aside for the time being.

In the beginning let us work on developing the inner strength needed to realise one-pointedness, starting with khaṇika samādhi, then upacāra samādhi and finally appanā (or jhāna) samādhi. Sometimes we might wonder why it is that although the mind has reached the level of upacāra samādhi, it doesn't go deeper into oneness. The reason is that upacāra samādhi itself has various levels of increasing refinement. When the mind is brought to the peace of upacāra samādhi through the power of contemplation, this peacefulness is on a relatively coarse level at first. After dwelling in this coarser level of upacāra samādhi to its fullest extent, the mind's internal strength weakens and seems to return to normal, just as if we hadn't been meditating at all. We then have to begin practising anew; contemplating, meditating, watching the breath and focusing inwards again.

We continue practising in this way until the foundation of the mind becomes stronger and it enters an upacāra samādhi of intermediate

[4] Sukkhavipassako – lit. One who practises 'dry insight'. Although 'dry' is often interpreted as 'without jhāna', Ajahn Anan insists that this is a misunderstanding; jhāna samādhi is prerequisite to enlightenment.

[5] The Three Knowledges are: 1. Recollection of past lives; 2. Perception of beings in other realms and knowledge of their kamma; 3. Knowledge of destruction of the defilements that bind the heart to saṃsāra.

refinement. At this stage the nature of the body is seen clearly to the point where it seems as if we can abandon all our defilements, cutting them off completely. However, the mind still doesn't become unified but weakens and withdraws once more. Therefore, we have to practise still further until the mind enters the most subtle and refined level of upacāra samādhi. The mind that dwells in this fully refined state of samādhi sees very deeply indeed.

Upacāra samādhi of intermediate refinement can make the heart serene for months at a time. When skilled at this level, the mind only requires a little focusing before entering samādhi and sometimes remains there for the whole day. The mind may slip away from samādhi at times, such as before falling asleep, but on awakening, the mind still holds the perception of inner stillness and with a moments focus, re-enters this intermediate level of upacāra samādhi.

The lower level of upacāra samādhi can arise through listening to and investigating our experience, both its conventional reality and its ultimate reality, which when seen, leads the heart to liberation[6]. For example, we can contemplate the mind and the objects of the mind. If we abide with the sense of 'bare knowing' – seeing the mind as one thing and the objects of mind as another – then letting-go is possible. Through insight into the conventional reality of body and mind-objects, the heart is liberated from attachment to these things.

How we perceive this meditation hall can also be the basis for investigation into conventional and ultimate reality. Is this hall big or small? On a day when few people come, it appears very spacious and yet on festival days with many visitors, it can seem too crowded. However, the hall itself doesn't claim to be either large or small; these

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[6] sammuti and vimutti

adjectives are merely conventions of speech to which the deluded mind attaches and creates its subject-object world. In reality, the hall is just exactly the way it is, nothing more and nothing less. Through reflections such as this, we come to see the conventional world according to reality, which leads the heart to liberation from clinging attachment.

This kind of contemplation where we gain deep insight into external phenomena can, at that moment, cause the mind to converge in samādhi. The Nine Insight Knowledges[7] may manifest also at that instant and the mind will see into the true nature of reality for as long as three days. The arising and ceasing of conditioned phenomena is seen as it actually occurs. Looking externally, conditions can be seen as decaying and disintegrating and focusing internally, the full horror of this truth is realised. All conditions, whether internal or external, are a cause of attachment and suffering and therefore, should be viewed as fearful in nature and worthy only of disgust and dispassion. If we see this deeply, then we experience great joy and contentment. The material world is unable to give us this type of happiness.

If we have seen the Dhamma then we no longer seek satisfaction in the world. The heart is no longer attached to worldly things as it sees greater value in the experience of upacāra samādhi and in a mind developed through meditation. With the experience of such insight, our faith and confidence in the teachings of the Buddha become firmer and we start looking for the way out of this world. These feelings of disgust and dispassion free the heart from the tendency to seek delight in the world.

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[7] vipassanāñāṇa

In seeking the path that leads away from worldly happiness, we increase our efforts in meditation. When the mind withdraws from the lower or intermediate levels of upacāra samādhi, where concentration was sustained for an entire day or month, this experience cannot always be repeated. It is the nature of meditation practice that sometimes the heart enters upacāra samādhi but at other times enters only khaṇika samādhi. However, the foundation in upacāra samādhi and the insight already gained is the real driving force of the mind, just like the first stage of a rocket that although now out of energy, has already succeeded in bringing us this far. The second stage of the rocket can now propel us to greater and greater heights.

Whatever our method of meditation, be it body contemplation, mindfulness of breathing or the contemplation of death, we have to practise and develop it a lot. At this stage in our practice, the heart becomes increasingly more peaceful and serene. This state of serenity completely fills the heart and can last for many years. With stable mindfulness, the heart is easy to control and enters the intermediate level of upacāra samādhi with more consistency. At first we might not recognise this, thinking that we are about to enter jhāna. Once again however, this does not happen. To continue the analogy, we have cast off the second stage of the rocket and are now being propelled along by the third. Nevertheless, our meditation deepens and we increase our effort to find ways of making the mind more peaceful.

At this stage, our practice of meditation is strong and stable. The Five Powers of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom come together in the mind. This means that the Seven Factors of Enlightenment start to arise. In fact they already begin to arise from the first experiences of upacāra samādhi and along with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, they continue to develop more and more. The heart becomes freer little by little up to this level of upacāra

samādhi. At this stage, sometimes the mere act of recollecting Dhamma – the uncertainty of life and the inevitability of death for example – is enough to make the heart peaceful. Luang Por Chah taught that if the power of greed, hatred and delusion is so strong that we cannot hold any other meditation object in mind, then we should contemplate the subject of death.

When newly ordained, mindfulness of breathing and the contemplation of death were my main methods of meditation. This was because I still used to think and fantasise a lot about the future. When young and youthful, we tend to think only in terms of gain and progress, never of decline and loss. For this reason, I took up the theme of death for contemplation, seeing the danger in the endless round of birth and demise, where the fortunes of life are unpredictable, and where the only certainty is that of passing away. Through such reflections, the heart is moved by a sense of profound sadness towards the universality of suffering and by a deep urgency to transcend it, like the desire to flee from a burning house.

When I was practising at Wat Nong Pah Pong, Luang Por Chah instructed us to develop these themes of meditation in order to prevent the mind from just following its likes and dislikes. He taught us many skilful means by which to gain an understanding of the Dhamma and we strove to practise accordingly. This meant that we had to be willing to make sacrifices, giving up our old habits through the cultivation of generosity, moral discipline and the practice of meditation.

Before my ordination as a monk, I had already gained deep insight into conventional reality and that which lies beyond such conventions. On that occasion, the insight into conventional reality was so profound, it seemed as though the heart had been transported to another world, evoking such deep feelings of joy and rapture that they

lasted for three days. The feeling of inner contentment was so great that I had no desire to eat; I only wanted to enter the forest and meditate. The inspiration generated by this experience was so profound, it compelled me to renounce the world and, ordaining as a monk, begin the search for liberation from suffering. I viewed all worldly wealth as meaningless; a cause of attachment, worry and stress – mental states which, in turn, condition further suffering and lead away from peace. The heart that is peaceful and inwardly joyful clearly comprehends the truth. At this stage the Nine Insight Knowledges arise and the heart seeks the way to liberation from suffering.

In this way of practice, the mind must always be focused on its meditation object. Wherever we go, sometimes we will have to deal with crowds of people, causing feelings of attraction or aversion to arise. In this case, we can incline the mind towards the contemplation of death. Whatever our theme of meditation, we should always keep it in mind. We will then be at peace and free from such moods of like and dislike. However, this type of peacefulness arises through the practice of tranquillity meditation, not through liberating wisdom. Even the contemplation of death is still a method of tranquillity meditation although it can also be used as a basis for insight, enabling the heart to let go of attachment and become radiant and pure. When we have made the mind more peaceful through contemplating death, or through practising some other method of meditation, then it enters upacāra samādhi with ease. In this state of stillness and serenity there is only the slightest amount of mental activity.

During my fifth rains retreat[8] I began the practice of asubha

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[8] Every year from July to October – the time of the Asian rainy-season – there is a compulsory monastic retreat. A monk's seniority is determined by the number of these retreats he has completed.

kammaṭṭhāna[9]. I had previously determined not to seriously take up this type of meditation until after I'd been a monk for five years. I have no idea why I made this resolution, but the upshot was that I never practised asubha before this time. During my fifth rains-retreat therefore, I was determined to focus on asubha meditation. Through the power of imagination and visualisation, I created images in the mind of the ugly and unattractive aspects of the body. The clarity of these visualisations increased to the point where they became what are called 'nimitta' or 'fixed mental images'. Sometimes I experienced nauseating visions of blood dribbling from my mouth down to my belly. These nimitta were so real that I almost vomited. Seeing the repulsiveness of the body through the cultivation of these nimitta causes pīti, or rapture, to arise. The clearer the insight into the loathsome nature of the body – both internally and externally – then the greater these feeling of pīti will be. If the contemplation deepens even further than this, then sukha, or bliss, arises and eventually the mind becomes still and serene.

Nimitta are of two different types. At first these nimitta are merely lucid visions that arise during meditation for short periods of time. However, with practice, they later become fixed mental images that are as vivid and as easy to hold in mind as if one were seeing the real thing with open eyes[10]. When these nimitta are fixed in the mind, if we desire it, they can be expanded or enlarged. Initially when contemplating the body, we can visualise any of its parts. These

[9] Asubha kammaṭṭhāna is the practice of contemplating the body from the perspective of its unattractive or repulsive nature, for the purpose of eliminating desire and attraction towards it.
[10] These two types of mental images are called uggaha and paṭibhāga nimitta – see Glossary.

visualisations can then be transformed into fixed mental images, which can be enlarged or expanded for deeper contemplation. This ability is essential.

If the mind has reached this stage, it will be able to analyse physical phenomena in terms of dhātu or fundamental elements. Contemplating fallen leaves for example; whether green, brown or yellow, we can see that they revert to the state of soil. If we then turn towards the body, we can see that its nature is also one of decline and fall. Like fallen leaves, the physical body also returns to the earth. If the body can be seen as a mere composition of earth, then the heart will be peaceful and at ease. At this point, although the mind may enter upacāra samādhi or even jhāna at times, the state of emptiness has not yet been realised. However, if we analyse this earth-element by reducing it to its most refined state – seeing it break apart into dust and then disperse as mere atoms – the heart will realise the state of emptiness, that is, not-self. When the mind is refined, still and serene, the empty nature of the body is seen. With this realisation of emptiness, the heart abandons attachment to the view that the body is one's self[11]. This clear insight into emptiness arises through wisdom. This experience is called tadaṅga vimutti; temporary liberation of the heart through wisdom.

Samādhi can also bring about the state of emptiness, but through the power of suppression. Here, the mind is empty only of mind-objects, not of defilements. There is still attachment in the heart along with

[11] The progress of insight can be summarised as follows: A paṭibhāga nimitta is created where is body is seen as a mere composition of earth-element. Peace arises in the heart and attachment to the view of the body as one's self weakens. Subsequently, by manipulating the paṭibhāga nimitta – making the earth element decompose and completely pass away – this element is then seen as impermanent. The realisation then arises in the heart that if the earth element is impermanent, the body cannot be one's self.

greed, hatred and delusion, but when the mind is peaceful, these defilements are suppressed. The same is true for the contemplation of the elements at its basic level; greed, hatred and delusion are subdued but not destroyed. However, when we contemplate these elements according to reality, seeing them as anicca – dukkha – anattā, the heart realises emptiness. This realisation of emptiness is where we gain insight into the truth of the material world because the mind disengages from the body and is seen as a separate reality. It feels as though the heart has been transported to another world. This is a world of neither conventions nor appearances, a world of neither greed nor hatred. This is not a world of beings and people, nor a world of self and others. This is the realm of liberation.

At this stage however, although the heart gains a glimpse of freedom, it cannot yet reach this state and must return to the world of conventional reality. Nevertheless, we realise that if we keep contemplating and gaining insight into not-self, we will see the Dhamma. This knowledge of the inevitability of crossing-over into freedom is called gotrabhu ñāṇa. The third stage of the rocket has propelled us beyond the earth's gravity and on into outer space.

At this stage, we are greatly inspired. With the heart constantly abiding in khaṇika or upacāra samādhi, we don't have to admonish ourselves to put forth effort practising sitting and walking meditation; the heart is naturally inclined this way. At this point we clearly see the path and so strive in meditation regardless of what we think we might attain. We just put forth effort practising meditation until the mind is peaceful. Usually the mind abides in upacāra samādhi but with the deepening of this tranquillity, it enters the stillness and serenity of appanā samādhi; full absorption. Here the heart has profound inner strength, which when directed towards investigation, can clearly distinguish between the mind and mind-objects. With repetition of this

insight, the power generated through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is brought to completion and this Path converges in the heart.

This experience of magga samaṅgī can last for three days, seven days or even for a month. The Dhamma is clearly seen, there is no longer any uncertainty. The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are seen in the heart with no room for doubt. The heart dwells in this state of freedom for three to seven days or even longer, depending on the power generated by the unified Path. Everything is seen in the light of liberation. Whatever the world may claim, the liberated heart now says differently. When the power of this attainment comes to an end, the mind returns to a mundane state. However, there are no longer any doubts about the path to peace because the heart has realised and experienced emptiness. Alternatively, we can say that Nibbāna has been seen or that the mind has entered the stream of Dhamma; in conventional language there are many ways to describe this experience. One who has reached this stage will no longer have any doubts about the path of practice.

In the beginning, what concerns us is how to develop the faith that will get us practising meditation. Once we start meditating, the results will come by themselves. Luang Por Chah compared this process to entering inside a temple. Describing the contents of the temple is solely for the purpose of arousing the interest of others and persuading them to enter, at which point, they will see for themselves. In the same way, we can ask ourselves what we need to do to get us practising mindfulness of breathing and body contemplation, because once we start practising, the results will come by themselves. This is my advice in developing the practice of samādhi.

Please understand therefore, that there are two different experiences of emptiness. One experience of emptiness arises from the peace of samādhi, realised by focusing on the breath, contemplating the body or by practising some other method of meditation. However, a much more exalted experience of emptiness is that which comes from abandoning attachment. This realisation of emptiness arises through wisdom and is the experience of vimutti or liberation. This experience of emptiness comes when grasping has been uprooted in the heart.

With this realisation of emptiness, the heart abides effortlessly in the lower level of upacāra samādhi; one no longer needs to do anything. If the experience of liberation has advanced to a more profound stage where the power of the unified Path is stronger, then the mind will dwell in the intermediate level of upacāra samādhi and eventually in the third and most refined level of all. This is the way the power of the liberated mind works. This level of upacāra samādhi is freed of defilement and is different from the type of samādhi that is first experienced. The initial type of samādhi brings about a state of emptiness by merely suppressing the defilements. After the mind has become one-pointed (through suppression of the hindrances), it turns to body contemplation. This contemplation (empowered through jhāna) leads to the abandoning of the defilements and causes another, deeper experience of emptiness to arise in the heart. This is a state of purity. It is a state where samādhi arises automatically through purity of mind and where the body and mind are light and tranquil.

In the beginning practising samādhi is difficult. We have to deal with all kinds of negative moods and our samādhi is unstable. We enter samādhi but it soon vanishes. So we contemplate making the mind peaceful, but again this samādhi disappears. The mind's inner strength is not sufficient; this is the way it is in the beginning. Focusing the mind and contemplating Dhamma is mentally exhausting but we must

patiently endure. At first we have to be restrained in every way. This is a difficult, arduous practice but we have to be patient; the results will come later on. If we experience this type of suffering in the present, then happiness will come as a result. Therefore, as yogis[12] – or seekers of liberation – who have gained a human birth and encountered the Buddha's Teaching, let us strive in this practice of meditation for the sake of further encountering the Dhamma in our hearts.

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[12] yogāvacara

Seeking Buddho – Awakened Awareness.

Every year on January 16th, the ordained and lay disciples of Venerable Ajahn Chah assemble at Wat Nong Pah Pong to commemorate his passing away and to practise the legacy of Dhamma he left behind. Venerable Ajahn Anan gave the following Dhamma talk on this occasion in 2005.



"It is not everyday that a being comes into the world to proclaim this best of Paths. It was our Teacher, the Supremely Enlightened Buddha, who awakened to and made known this Noble Path, and it was one who had practised in His wake – one of the Ariya Sangha – who explained this way of practice to us all, that is, Luang Pu Chah. Therefore, we must follow his example and practise accordingly. Luang Pu Chah explained the way of practice completely, it is just a question of whether we will walk this path or not."

We must all be determined from this point onwards to make our minds peaceful. We focus our awareness upon knowing the in-breath and the out-breath together with the mantra ‘Buddho’. Developing these basic meditation themes of Buddhānussati (the recollection of the qualities of the Buddha) and ānāpānasati (mindfulness of breathing) are a way of cultivating sati, that is, ‘mindful recollection’. We practise Dhamma in order to train ourselves, to further the development of our hearts and minds. We practise meditation for the purpose of elevating our hearts to loftier, nobler heights, making it more excellent and sublime.

All of us here possess confidence, faith and trust in the Great Teacher – the Supremely Enlightened Buddha. He is known as Satthādevāmanussānaṃ – the Teacher of gods and humans. The arising of a Supremely Enlightened Buddha, one who realises Ultimate Truth for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, both earthly and celestial, is not a common occurrence. However, we have all gained the opportunity to encounter the Buddhasāsana.

The Lord Buddha set the wheel of Dhamma turning over two thousand five hundred years ago and with this first teaching, Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña attained to the Vision of Dhamma. This same Teaching is still in motion, being realised and transmitted right into the present by the Lord Buddha’s Sāvaka Saṅgha – his

enlightened disciples – such as the most venerable Luang Por Chah who practised in accordance with the instructions of the fully enlightened Teacher until he understood and realised the Dhamma for himself. He then established a base for training here at Wat Nong Pah Pong, producing a large following, many of whom are now senior monks and great teachers themselves. Therefore, as long as we still have faith and are alive, we have this opportunity to discover the Teaching of the Buddha, its practice and its realisation.

Every year we gather here at Wat Nong Pah Pong to recollect the kindness of Luang Por Chah and to practise sitting and walking meditation as an offering to his memory. We make an effort towards the higher cultivation of the mind because the mind that has never been trained or developed will inevitably follow its worldly moods. When mindfulness and samādhi are weak and unreliable, the heart will naturally race along with these habitual moods and mind-states: desire & aversion; sloth & torpor; agitation & restlessness; ill-will and doubt. These Five Hindrances are what separate the heart from the good and the wholesome, and obstruct the realisation of Dhamma.

At this time, however, we can make an effort to train our hearts, trying to cultivate mindfulness whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Whatever our activity, be it drinking, thinking or talking, we have mindfulness, that is, clear recollection. Alternatively, we can establish the recitation of a mantra – 'Buddho', 'Dhammo' or 'Saṅgho' – to govern and guide our mind. Whether standing, walking, seated or reclining, we establish this internal recitation of 'Buddho' to govern the minds tendency towards distraction and diversity as it wanders about in the past and the future, continually proliferating.

If we don't have a basic meditation object to govern and guide our mind, then it will be very difficult to make it calm and still. The heart

will inevitably just follow its usual variety of moods and preoccupations. However, when we put forth effort to train mindfulness, and focus it on looking after the heart through the recitation of a mantra, then it will gradually become more peaceful. The mind that used to be lost in proliferation, unable to settle in meditation for even five minutes, will become more peaceful, patient and resolute. We will then see that not training the heart results only in suffering because our outlook will always be wrong.

When we are really determined to practise meditation and develop our hearts to know and see the Dhamma, then through the strength of this chanda, or genuine, wholesome aspiration, we must endeavour to struggle and strive in accordance with the Lord Buddha's instructions. The way of practice to knowing, seeing and understanding Dhamma is the excellent path of sīla – samādhi – paññā, that is, the Noble Eightfold Path.

Today we recited the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta[1] recounting the Four Noble Truths of dukkha, samudaya, nirodha and magga. The reason we come here is to study these very truths; the way dukkha – suffering – is, the way suffering is caused – samudaya, the way suffering ceases – nirodha, and how to practise in order to bring the heart to nirodha – the cessation of suffering. Chanting and reciting in this way is a skilful means by which to study the Dhamma as practical theory[2]. After we have memorised and recited the teachings like this, we are able to remember and understand them so that when we begin the practice to realise the Truth, then everything we contemplate becomes Dhamma.

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[1] The first discourse of the Buddha.
[2] pariyatti

Practising Dhamma means striving to abandon the unwholesome states that arise within our hearts, making merit and maintaining the wholesome, and preventing unarisen, unwholesome states from arising. This is equivalent to the Path factor of Right Effort. If we have no mindfulness, or don't control ourselves with mindfulness, then it is like a river without a dam. Without an embankment to contain the water, it will naturally overflow. In the same way, if we don't have any mindfulness, or our mindfulness is insufficient, then our habitual moods will inevitably flood-in and overwhelm our mind. Therefore, we need to establish a strong and stable mindfulness by focusing upon the meditation mantra 'Buddho'.

We sit in meditation clearly knowing the in-breath and the out-breath along with the mantra 'Buddho' watching over our heart until eventually, this internal recitation fades away and tranquillity arises. Sometimes there is a feeling that mindfulness has gathered at one point within the body, such as the tip of the nose for example. At this point, the heart is peaceful and firm in samādhi.

Samādhi means 'concentration' or 'concentrated awareness'. The method of practice that results in right concentration is called samatha kammaṭṭhāna. This refers to those skilful techniques by which the heart is brought to total tranquillity. The recitation of a mantra such as 'Buddho', 'Dhammo' or 'Saṅgho', practising mindfulness of breathing or the contemplation of death and so forth, are all forms of samatha meditation. When the mind has been trained in samatha meditation, then whether standing, walking, seated or reclining, there will be the excellent peace of samādhi.

Vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna refers to those meditation practices that bring us to correct knowledge and vision of the Truth. In what way, however, does this insight arise? When the mind is properly calm and

peaceful, it is this very peace that we then use to train ourselves in basic contemplation. This means investigating the physical body to which the heart clings as ours or our self.

This clinging attachment, or upādāna, is the cause of renewed existence, the cause of birth and the cause of aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. When the heart has upādāna towards the body, then this physical form is perceived as our self or as something we possess. With the resulting experience of 'us' and 'them', there is also the appearance of desire and aversion and the process of origination begins with the renewal of being and birth, and is always accompanied by the arising of dukkha. It is this very dukkha that brings renewal of being and birth, and which creates upādāna, taṇhā, kilesa, and finally avijjā – fundamental ignorance. This is paṭiccasamuppāda; the process of Dependant Origination evolving according to the conditions of defilement. However, when we develop sīla, samādhi and paññā – as we have come here to do by determining to keep precepts, training diligently in mindfulness and samādhi, and striving to cultivate wisdom – then this is called walking the Noble Path.

While we listen to Dhamma, we can also focus upon the in-breath and the out-breath, establishing our mindfulness on the sensation of the breathing together with the mantra 'Buddho'. This is also practising sīla and samādhi together with paññā – wisdom that is, in as far as training the mind in tranquillity is concerned. When the mind is peaceful, then we can contemplate what this physical body that we habitually attach to as 'me' and 'mine' is actually like. What was its miniscule form at conception like? What did it look like in the womb? What was the body like when it was newly born? How did it develop and upon what does its life depend? If our body goes without food, water, oxygen or warmth, then its elemental properties cannot sustain

themselves. This body that we cling to as our self must eventually disintegrate according to causes and conditions.

If we contemplate in this way, the wisdom will arise that if this body we habitually cling to is really ours or our self, then why can we not control it? Why is it that although we don't desire it, the body grows old, sickens and dies? We don't want old-age, sickness and death so why do these things happen? The wisdom will arise that these things are normal; they are the way of nature. The heart will then disentangle itself from this upādāna, that is, from the sense of 'me and mine'. If this body was really our self, we would have command over it and be able to direct it away from that which we do not desire – old-age, sickness and death. But it isn't like this; this lump of a body follows the natural law of cause and condition.

The manifestation of sīla is the arising and sustaining of mindfulness and wisdom through the restraint of body and speech. The heart is firmly focused in samādhi without the hindrances of restlessness, anger, ill-will, sloth, torpor, agitation and doubt. At that moment the heart is free from all the hindrances and possessed of internal peace and serenity. This is the manifestation of samādhi.

We then use the power of this samādhi for contemplation of the body, analysing it in terms of elements or khandhas. Investigate this body for yourselves. Contemplate the external body, that is, the bodies of others, and the internal body or 'the body within the body', that is, ourselves sitting right here. What is there inside this body wrapped in skin and hair with its nails and teeth? We must investigate to see what there is, analysing its components into elements and khandhas so that the heart will acknowledge the truth and give rise to insight. This is how we train our hearts in wisdom. Through frequent training in wisdom like this, the power of samādhi will grow faint and fade away.

We must then focus on bringing back and strengthening our mindfulness and concentration by training our hearts with a samatha meditation object without letting-up, whatever our posture may be. Whatever our thoughts or feelings might be, we must observe and look after our heart continuously.

Those things that wander into awareness are namely, forms, sounds, odours, flavours, bodily sensations and mind-states. If the heart lacks concentration, then it will chase after this sensory contact, giving rise to becoming and birth together with happiness and suffering. The number of these becomings and births are countless. Life at present takes many forms, always cycling from birth to death and from death to birth; sometimes human, sometimes sub-human; sometimes – with the growth of wisdom – as devas, and when the heart grows in peace, even as brahma gods.

Consequently, we must put forth effort to train ourselves by patiently enduring sensory contact and the moods that arise in conjunction with this. If we allow this sensory contact to possess the heart, then samādhi will be weak and wisdom won't arise. Sīla, that is, virtuous, disciplined behaviour, is an essential aspect of the training that requires our careful attention. Sīla includes well-mannered composure of conduct and speech, together with patient endurance.

This virtue of patience and forbearance is a trait and a treasure of the sages and saints. When possessed by moods such as anger and ill-will, we can initially practise patience and forbearance by determining not to follow these mind-states. When we can patiently endure and curb our feelings, then this is called practising the 'Dhamma of Restraint'. Patiently containing our moods and mind-states means knowing how to contemplate in order to renounce and relinquish from the heart these feelings of lust and hate or anger and ill-will. We generate feelings of

renunciation and self-sacrifice by sharing what we have for the benefit of others. We must also be sincere in our aspiration to develop goodness and virtue.

Being born as a human and encountering the Buddhasāsana is not easily accomplished. The Lord Buddha gave a simile expressing the immeasurable difficulty of gaining a human birth: It is more difficult to gain human existence than it is for a blind turtle living in the great ocean – and which surfaces only once every hundred years – to come across a floating bamboo ring that is being ever-blown by the wind in all four directions.

Nowadays, the greater number of those born as human beings can be called 'human' only in outward form. On the level of the heart, however, they are not yet complete or perfect human beings. It is extremely difficult for the heart to become fully human because of the ever-blowing wind of sensory contact. Our hearts and minds are blown back and forth by the wind of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, moods and mind-states. Lacking peace, our sīla is shaky and concentration doesn't come. Therefore, we can look within our hearts and ask ourselves, 'Will it be difficult to realise our humanity?'

Through contemplation we come to see the danger in lacking sīla and also the benefits that these qualities of virtue and discipline bring. Practising sīla brings us internal happiness, peace and security. In Pāli these qualities are referred to as 'bhoga sappaya' – 'the most excellent of treasures', that is, internal spiritual wealth. This is called to mind in the phrase: Sīlena sugatiṃ yanti – sīla is the vehicle to happiness;
sīlena bhoga sampadā – sīla is the way to spiritual wealth**.**

When well-restrained in body and speech, we can see that sīla is something of immense value; a vital wealth and the most perfect of

possessions that can free our hearts from the cycle of birth and death. Whatever worldly wealth we may possess, it cannot free us from the suffering of saṃsāra; the greater the heart's greed, then greater the delusion and clinging attachment, and the greater the growth of desire. This desire is what gives rise to the binding snare of upādāna which, even if not very strong, is difficult to abandon. However, when we are determined to practise sīla, we can see the many advantages to be gained, that is, we realise how restraint, modesty and graceful behaviour of body, speech and mind bring happiness now and in the future. Sīla is an essential inner wealth that will enable our minds to know and see the Dhamma and realise Nibbāna, that is, peace and coolness within the heart.

Therefore, we must be determined to be well-trained in our behaviour of body and speech. We must train our hearts in proper concentration, but this requires the use of a meditation object – as has already been explained – whatever this may be. We can practise maraṇānussati – the recollection of death – contemplating the uncertainty of our lives and the certainty of death. We continuously reflect that having been born, we also must die. Wherever we hear news of death and dying, we can likewise reflect upon our own mortality; we cannot escape from death.

Suppose that the global human population amounted to five thousand million people, of whom fifty million died every year, five hundred million every decade. If there were no new, supplementary births, then within a century the entire population of the world would have passed away – all five thousand million people. However, because there are additional births replacing those who have died, we fail to see the presence of death, excepting those terrible events that stem from natural disasters involving water, wind or fire. When great numbers of human beings die through events such as these, then we

can feel our own mortality and are able to reflect back upon ourselves that we, too, must also die; we cannot escape from death.

When the heart is peaceful following on from whatever the method of training employed, whether the contemplation of death or asubha meditation, then the insight can arise that really, there is nobody who dies. What we take for a person is only the four elements shifting and changing according to causes and conditions. At that moment the clear insight arises that there is no self or soul, no person or being, no 'me' or 'you'. This insight manifests as a non-verbal, non-discursive awareness. This is the arising of the wisdom that is known as vipassanā and is dependant upon a mind that has previously been concentrated with samatha meditation.

When the mind has been so concentrated, then whenever possessed by attachment to conventions such as 'the self', simultaneous insight into not-self will arise at that moment. This is what is called vipassanā. We realise that referring to the body – whether our own or that of others – as 'our self' or 'their self', as 'this being' or 'that person', is only a convention of speech. Really there is no person or being, there is no self or soul and there is no us-and-them. It is this realisation right here that was spoken of as a non-verbal awareness arising in the heart, clearly knowing and seeing the Dhamma, leaving no room for doubt.

Training ourselves further, we put forth effort practising walking and sitting meditation until our hearts become calm and serene. Peace and pīti – spiritual rapture – arise within our heart whatever our posture. Previously, we had to be vigilant in our practice and strive hard to arouse energy and effort. However, when the mind becomes peaceful, the practice takes on a discipline and a momentum of its own that pulls us onto the walking path and the meditation cushion. With

mindfulness watching over the heart, knowledge and understanding arise.

The one who guards and cares for their heart will be freed from Māra's snare – delivered from all dukkha. With mindfulness carefully watching over our heart, the objects of attachment will be seen, and with reflection, let go of. When all sense objects are seen as anicca – dukkha – anattā, then the heart becomes peaceful. However, we still cannot afford to be negligent. When the heart is stilled with the calm and peace of samādhi, then we must return again to the investigation of the body, contemplating this saṅkhāra that is a real source of clinging attachment. We must strive to uproot this upādāna right here.

If we continuously practise in this way, then wisdom will arise, enabling samādhi to develop. This samādhi will, in turn, aid in the arising of sīla, that is, in the cultivation of discipline and restraint. We call this practice the Threefold Training of sīla, samādhi and paññā, which can be expanded to include the eight factors of the Noble Path as explained by the Supremely Enlightened Buddha, the Teacher of devas and humans.

'Buddho' means 'one who is awakened to the Truth'. After the Buddha's enlightenment, then due to the power of His Great Compassion, rather than dwelling alone in the bliss of liberation, He went forth with loving kindness to teach the multitude beginning with Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña – the first of the Sāvaka Saṅgha. This realisation and transmission of the Dhamma continues through our teacher and guide in the practice, Luang Pu Chah, right into the present. I believe that if we diligently apply ourselves to his teachings, then peace and happiness will arise in our lives.

Laypeople should firmly establish their lives in virtue and goodness, and try to cultivate mindfulness, samādhi, wisdom and sammā-ājīva – Right Livelihood. Whatever our work or duties, we should endeavour to perform them with mindfulness using a mantra, Buddho – Dhammo – Saṅgho, to hold our attention. We have come together to practise Dhamma and so whatever bodily movement or wholesome activity we engage in, we can meditate at the same time by focusing upon the mantra 'Buddho' continuously. In this way we can say that we are performing both our external duties and the internal task of making the heart peaceful. When we strive to train our hearts continuously like this, then our humanity will be complete in both body and mind. We become a kalyāṇajana – one whose heart is possessed of goodness and grace – like all of us gathered together here practising the Dhamma. The heart of such a person aspires only to the arising of the wholesome merit that comes through the practice of Dhamma.

For what purpose have we travelled here today, from the towns and the cities both near and far? We have come seeking Buddho – 'the Knower' – or, in other words, to realise this enlightened awareness and awaken our hearts like the Lord Buddha before us. In bringing forth this 'Buddho', or 'awakened awareness', then there is Buddho on the level of sīla and Buddho on the level of generosity or dāna.

We already know that there is abundant wealth in the world and that stinginess is blameworthy. However, if we don't use our wealth beneficially, then when we are gone, it's worthless. Everyone is born and dies, and nobody can take with them the assets they have amassed, whether vast wealth or even this physical body; entirely everything must be left behind. If our assets are not used in wholesome and meritorious activities directed towards our spiritual welfare or the benefit of society as a whole, then they have scarcely any value. However, if we are heedful and possessed of Buddho – this awakened

awareness – then according to our strength or ability, we can be generous, self-sacrificing and of service to others, whether to our country, our fellows in society or those experiencing accidents and misfortune. In this way we are giving and sharing our happiness with others. This is how we perfect the virtues of dāna and cāga – generosity and self-sacrifice.

When these virtues of goodness and generosity become natural inclinations of the heart, we then train in making peace and tranquillity our hearts natural abiding. Sometimes, however, while training the heart in peace, there will be restlessness, agitation and doubt. This is also natural. On occasions we may become frustrated: 'I'm a meditator! Why are greed, anger and delusion still present in the heart?' It is natural though, that because our heart is not yet 'Buddho' – enlightened – it will still be deluded by the power of ignorance, craving and attachment[3].

Therefore, when we come to the practice of Dhamma, we have to abandon ignorance, craving and attachment. We must let go of delusion and cultivate wisdom, establishing the heart in Buddho – awakened awareness. When possessed of Buddho, the heart is not deluded. The undeluded heart is one possessed of wisdom, and the heart possessed of wisdom is free from suffering.

The awareness that is Buddho begins with a heart that is happy, peaceful and free from stinginess. The Lord Buddha's heart was completely established in Buddho. He further taught that if we aspire to a peaceful, radiant heart or, in other words, if we are determined to

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[3] avijjā, taṇhā and upādāna

realise the genuine, original mind[4]– the mind naturally possessed of purity and peace – then we must ardently meditate.

Today we have such an opportunity to strive in meditation. We can use this occasion to listen to the teachings of the Krooba Ajahns and senior monks from the various branch monasteries (of Wat Nong Pah Pong) who have travelled here today to recollect the kindness of Luang Pu Chah, the teacher who enabled us to gain understanding in these very teachings, and who guided us in the same practice that we now undertake as an offering to his memory.

As we practise in dedication to Luang Pu Chah, we are cultivating that which is of benefit to us; higher wisdom and understanding. We have to put forth effort to train ourselves, developing patient endurance in both sitting and walking meditation. Why is it that we train ourselves? We train to realise the Dhamma. Our Krooba Ajahn – Luang Pu Chah – told us how this realisation of Dhamma did not come easily; before his heart awakened to Buddho and he was able to teach and instruct his lay and ordained disciples, he experienced all kinds of obstacles, barely escaping with his life.

We must focus on the mantra ‘Buddho’, establishing continuous awareness, whether standing, walking, sitting, reclining, working, talking, drinking or thinking. Right now, while listening to the Dhamma, we can direct our minds to peace and not allow our attention to wander to other things.

When the heart is peaceful, we can say that sīla, samādhi and paññā have arisen. We are able to understand the Dhamma as taught by the Lord Buddha; that this body is aniccaṃ – dukkhaṃ – anattā. Aniccaṃ

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[4] (Thai) jit derm tae

means 'impermanent', dukkhaṃ means 'suffering' and anattā means 'without a genuine self or soul'. These physical forms that we call our substance or our selves arise through a compounding of impersonal elements. The mind possessed by delusion, however, discriminates between these bodies believing: 'This is me, this is you'.

All of us sitting here are identical in that we breathe, eat and drink. Therefore, we are all composed of the same fundamental elements – earth, air, fire and water. Why then do we cling to these elements, identifying with them as 'me and you'? This attachment is because of delusion. The heart lacks wisdom and so delusion arises. In order to establish our heart in wisdom, we must have mindfulness and put forth effort to carefully restrain our actions of body, speech and mind in a way that gives rise to samādhi. In practising this way, we are cultivating satipaṭṭhāna because this way of practice is within the framework of these Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

When developing satipaṭṭhāna, do we begin by contemplating the body or feelings, the mind or mind-objects? Luang Pu Chah would answer that we begin by developing the First Foundation; the section called kāyagatā – mindfulness focused on the body. It is essential that we mindfully consider our physical body. Why is this so? For the reason that this coarse physical form – a source of our clinging attachment – can easily be investigated. As for the other Foundations of Mindfulness beginning with feelings, their investigation proceeds from the contemplation of the body. Bodily feelings and mental feelings, for example, are related to each other.

Sometimes we might investigate the body with mindfulness and wisdom, distinguishing between the various physical elements and immaterial aggregates, such as feelings, and contemplating their arising and ceasing until we realise that these feelings are merely

mental processes[5] that are neither a self nor a soul, neither a person nor a being and to be regarded as neither 'ours' nor 'theirs'.

On those occasions when the heart has been empowered through the practice to a greater degree, we can gain insight into the state of the mind itself; mind possessed by attraction or aversion; possessed by rāga, dosa or moha. Sometimes we are able to recognise the mind that is without these defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. When, with mindfulness and wisdom, the heart recognises these defilements together with attraction and aversion, then they pass away. This is an indication that, on these occasions, the investigation is focused on the Third Foundation of Mindfulness[6].

However, this does not mean that we are able to contemplate at this level all the time because the strength of our heart – the powers of samādhi and wisdom – eventually weaken, and we are unable to maintain the contemplation any more. The investigation then falls back to the Second Foundation focused on feelings which, in turn, further weakens and drops down to a lower level. Therefore, we must contemplate this body as the basic foundation of practice.

In the initial stage of the training, we must try our absolute hardest in caring for the mind, keeping it wholesome, firm and focused. We can look internally: 'What's our state of mind like? Is it wholesome or unwholesome? In what ways does the mind think and proliferate? Are these thoughts and mental formations just memories and fantasies?' Whatever mental phenomena[7] arise, we must observe and investigate them. If our inner strength is sufficient, when we contemplate these phenomena, wisdom will arise. When our inner strength weakens, then

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[5] nāma
[6] cittānupassanā
[7] nāma-dhamma

it is enough to investigate the body. This is the work we have to do. Striving in this way weakens clinging and attachment, brings forth wisdom and strengthens our practice of the Path. This way of practice can be called the 'Path of Power' or the 'Fearless Path' through which, the kilesas shrink away. However, we cannot cease in our efforts. Whenever we pause along the path, the kilesas take over from there.

We must put forth effort to be carefully composed and consistent in our practice of the Path. When our practice is steady all the time, then our heart will develop to a higher degree. If the heart is peaceful to a certain level while walking in meditation, then when coming to sit in samādhi, this calm and serenity will further deepen. When we maintain an even and continuous calm while sitting in meditation, then this tranquil abiding will develop and extend into all our normal, everyday movements and activities, and the heart will experience even greater peace.

The practice will progress to the level where, through investigation, the body is seen with insight as just four elements and as something loathsome and repulsive. The more the body is seen with insight as unattractive, the more the heart becomes beautiful and bright. The deeper the insight into the repulsiveness of the body, then the deeper the happiness that arises, and as this internal happiness increases, the more profound becomes the insight into not-self. The heart uproots clinging and attachment. It is as if it has entered another world. This experience can be called the comprehension or realisation of the Dhamma.

We persist and persevere training our hearts continuously this way until clear comprehension arises. We will come to know the meaning of the phrases: 'Appamāno Buddho' – boundless are the virtues and the goodness of the Lord Buddha; 'Appamāno Dhammo' – boundless

is the excellence of the Dhamma; 'Appamāno Saṅgho' – boundless are the virtues and the goodness of the Lord Buddha's enlightened disciples including our teacher, Luang Pu Chah.

Through the most venerable Luang Pu Chah – as our refuge and focus of recollection – we are also recollecting the virtues and goodness of the Saṅgha and the Enlightened Teachers[8]. That we have gathered here and are practising together today, is because of the goodness and kindness of Luang Pu Chah. The wholesome, meritorious and sublime spiritual virtues he accumulated through diligent practice are the very qualities that we bring to mind today. These virtues of our Krooba Ajahn that we recall today are absolutely boundless.

Whatever training we have received or whatever knowledge or understanding of the Dhamma we have gained, it is because of the kindness of our Krooba Ajahn who taught and instructed us with so much loving kindness. This itself was only made possible by virtue of the Lord Buddha's boundless and all encompassing great compassion, which motivated both His quest for enlightenment and, following this realisation, His mission to teach the Dhamma to the multitude.

In India at present, those who count themselves as faithful Buddhists amount to less than one percent of a total population that numbers more than one billion people. Thus the number of Buddhists in India can be reckoned as insignificant. However, owing to the loving kindness of the Lord Buddha's enlightened disciples, the Dhamma has spread to Thailand where it provides the founding and guiding principles of this country, which enable us to practise in their wake.

[8] (Thai) Krooba Ajahn

The Lord Buddha has already passed away into Parinibbāna but His teaching still remains. It is taught that: 'The one who sees the Dhamma, sees the Tathāgata'[9]. If we travel to India we can see the various holy sites: here the Buddha was born; right here is where the Lord Buddha realised enlightenment; here at the Deer Park in Isipatana is where He delivered the first teaching, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta; here is where He passed away into Parinibbāna. Visiting all these places can give rise to pīti and saṃvega, elevating our hearts, bringing forth that which is wholesome and meritorious. However, if we understand and realise the Dhamma, then we will see the Buddha in our heart. How do we see the Buddha? How do we see the Dhamma? How do we see anicca – dukkha – anattā? In order for this wisdom to arise, the heart must be at peace. How do we make the heart peaceful? Stilling the heart requires a basic meditation object. Wherever we live in this world, Thailand or elsewhere, we must develop our minds, cultivating a basic theme of meditation. We must develop mindfulness and the type of samādhi that is endowed with vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha and ekaggatā[10].

We meditate knowing the in-breath and the out-breath, focusing on the mantra 'Buddho'. Eventually the breathing becomes more refined and the mantra vanishes. The mind then converges firmly in samādhi. There is no internal recitation of a mantra; the mind is serene, happy, blissful and one-pointed. The mind has converged to the basic level of samādhi.

The mind that has converged in samādhi to this point is peaceful and free from all the hindrances. We can then use the power of this samādhi for contemplation in our quest for wisdom until we see

[9] 'The Sublime One'; an epithet of the Buddha.
[10] The five 'Jhāna Factors' – see Glossary.

clearly, that is, we see the Dhamma. When we see the Dhamma, we see the Buddha. We see Buddha – Dhamma – Saṅgha indivisibly together at the same moment. We no longer have any doubts about the meaning of the phrase: ‘The one who sees the Dhamma, sees the Tathāgata’.

Therefore, let us all get on with the practice, restraining our speech and actions, being disciplined and mindful and well concentrated in samādhi. Let us strive in battle with the hindrances of sloth & torpor, anger, ill-will and doubt. We must persevere even though it sometimes appears difficult and that we can no longer endure. When possessed of energy and effort then if we don’t get discouraged, we are bound to succeed. If our effort is consistent, then peace is bound to arise.

We have to consider how many years of our life remain. Suppose that we live to seventy-five years of age; how much longer do we have? If we are fifty years old already, then we only have twenty-five years left. Twenty-five years is not long at all. The hours and days are ticking by; our life too, will soon be extinguished and we will have to depart from this world. Whereas the length of this life is uncertain, death is a definite certainty.

Therefore, we must persist and persevere in training the mind and admonishing ourselves continuously, without lapse. We can remind ourselves that due to the goodness and kindness of Luang Pu Chah, this assembly of the faithful, both lay and ordained, increases in numbers every year. Furthermore, many Krooba Ajahns – disciples of Luang Pu Chah – have travelled here from near and far to venerate the goodness of our venerable teacher. Many laypeople have also come here from both near and far away to practise meditation and train the mind. Therefore, we remind ourselves as to the purpose of coming together here, that is, to study the Dhamma and to train the mind. We

can ask ourselves: 'How do we study the Dhamma? Where is the Dhamma?' The Dhamma is right here; this body and mind of ours. However much one expounds upon the teaching, the Truth lies here within this body and mind.

Therefore, we train our hearts to realise peace, and then we contemplate the body to gain the insight that it is clinging and attachment to this body alone that is the cause of greed, hatred, delusion and attachment itself. When clinging attachment has already arisen, then craving and defilement will arise as the conditioning cause for further attachment, bringing forth renewal of being and birth continuously.

All the various ways and routes through this world upon which we have travelled here from near or far away – whether by air, land or water –are still rooted only in this world, they are ways that merely wheel and wander in saṃsāra; the cycle of birth and death, death and birth. The best of Paths, however, is the Way that leads to magga-samaṅgī, that is, the unification of the eight factors of the Path or, in short, the merging into unity of sīla – samādhi – paññā. The way of the Noble Eightfold Path is the way out of saṃsāra.

It is not everyday that a being comes into the world to proclaim this best of Paths. It was our Teacher, the Supremely Enlightened Buddha, who awakened to and made known this Noble Path, and it was one who had practised in His wake – one of the Ariya Saṅgha – who explained this way of practice to us all, that is, Luang Pu Chah. Therefore, we must follow his example and practise accordingly. Luang Pu Chah explained the way of practice completely, it is just a question of whether we will walk this path or not. If we don't follow this path, then the heart will remain deluded and a cause of our mental and physical suffering.

The Buddha taught that if our bones did not decay as we wander through saṃsāra being born and dying endlessly, then there would not be enough room in this world to contain all these bones. We should consider this carefully, that if this world is not broad enough to contain the bones of even one person as they are born and die countless times, then wherever we walk or step on this earth, we are treading mountains of our own bones from all these previous lives.

We should further contemplate that whatever the duration of this saṃsāra may be, we have already experienced countless births, and so if we remain in a state of delusion, then we still won't know how many more years or future lives will have to come before we gain insight and saṃsāra reaches it end. In this life, however, we have gained a human birth and have discovered the Buddhasāsana. We can put forth effort to practise meditation so that we do not lose the advantage of this meritorious and auspicious human birth where we have encountered the Teachings of the Buddha. In Thailand the Buddhasāsana is complete and perfect in every way, and so we should put forth effort to realise these teachings. Don't dally in the practice; if we don't practise sincerely and resolutely, then we won't see or realise the truth.

Therefore, we should possess ourselves of chanda, viriya, citta and vimaṃsā[11] in order to develop the bodhi-pakkhiya dhammas, that is, the Enlightenment Factors. The bodhi-pakkhiya dhammas include these Four Roads to Success as well as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Spiritual Faculties,

[11] Chanda – desire for that which is wholesome; viriya – effort directed towards realising this aspiration; citta – mental resolve and single-minded focus; vimaṃsā – investigation of the ways and means of realising this goal. Collectively, these qualities are called the Four Roads to Success.

the Five Powers and so on. Collectively they are called the Enlightenment Factors, but these can be further divided into many categories that can seem quite complicated. However, when they come together in the mind, their function is simply to know: ‘Am I mindful? Where’s my mind right now? What’s my mind thinking about in this present moment? Is it wandering or lost in fantasies? What is the state of mind like?’ We can observe our own mind, asking ourselves the question as to who we should take as the teacher and trainer of this mind. The answer is that we take the ‘one who knows’[12] – this awakened awareness – as the teacher and trainer of our deluded heart.

If we don’t have this awakened awareness guiding the heart, then it will just race about, endlessly generating a continuous succession of becomings and births and suffering. It is said that with mindfulness closely keeping watch over and caring for our heart, it will not be destitute and orphaned like a child without a guardian, unable to look after itself. The mind is similar to this helpless child; without a guardian the mind will just race along thinking, fantasising, doubting, lost in views of self and others, which always arise with the feeling that these things – our self and others – are real. This is ignorance; these things are anattā, their reality is only the four elements.

These skeletons sitting right here, that is, all of us sitting right here; are they the same or different from each other? We can ask ourselves, as one pile of bones to another, ‘Are these skeletons men and women?’ They are neither of these; they are natural elements existing just the way they are. Head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth and skin – these are the wrappings of this body. What’s this body like on the inside? We can go internally and contemplate this ‘body within the body’ to see what is wrapped up inside.

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[12] (Thai) poo-roo

When our eyes contact forms, delusion and attachment arise. We perceive beauty and attractiveness which brings forth desire and aversion. What is the cause of this? The cause is ignorance smothering our hearts so that it doesn't see the truth. The Buddha declared that the Dhamma is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end. The beauty in the beginning is sīla. The beauty in the middle is that of samādhi, and if we are to arouse knowledge and vision of the Truth, then we must practise this centred concentration. The beauty in the end is wisdom, bringing it forth and perfecting it.

We are already possessed of good fortune and merit, and therefore should strive to realise the Dhamma in this lifetime, bringing it forth to reside in our heart. As a monk and a member of the Saṅgha, the Buddha called us a renunciant, one who is resolute, frugal and content; one who comes to train the heart with no desire but that of knowledge and the realisation of the Truth which is there to be realised in this world.

Whether an enlightened Buddha appears or not, the true nature of all things is aniccaṃ – dukkhaṃ – anattā. Although these truths have already been revealed, if the heart lacks wisdom, then delusion and attachment arise so that we do not see them. However, when the heart is possessed of wisdom, it will see the truth.

It has already been revealed that the body, for example, is aniccaṃ – dukkhaṃ – anattā. This body has no self or soul, it is not a person or a being or 'me' or 'you'. Has this body ever declared that it's our self? Have the hairs of the head and body or the nails, teeth or skin ever declared this? Have the bones or any other part of the body ever announced that they are our essence or self? We can take this body apart and see for ourselves. The skeleton, for example, is made up of

many parts located throughout the body, such as the bones of the skull, arms, legs, hands, feet and rib-cage. We can sort out the bones of the body a piece at a time, a section at a time. Have any of these parts ever declared that they are our self? None of them have ever announced this.

When we analyse the body and see that there is no self, then the heart becomes peaceful and the clear realisation arises that this body is merely elements that exist just as they are, following the way of nature. There is no person or being or self or soul or 'me' or 'you' to be found. Seeing in this way, the mind will disengage from the body and the simultaneous insight will arise that body is one thing, and mind another.

With this realisation, knowledge and vision arise but we no longer cling to this wisdom and insight, that is, we no longer identify with it as ours or our self. As we gain insight we let go of it at the same time, repeating this process over and over again. If we proceed this way over and over again, then the heart will become resplendent with the knowledge and vision of the Truth, and realise this very Dhamma that has long been revealed. The Lord Buddha announced that the Tathāgata is simply one who declares. What is it that He declares? He declares that this is impermanent; this is suffering; this is not-self.

When we don't have a sense of discipline or restraint of body and speech, then the heart is troubled and confused. We must have internal discipline because the heart that is troubled and confused is never satisfied. It is always on the lookout for sensory stimulation and chasing after the objects of sensual desire. The undisciplined heart is never content, it never has it's fill of sensuality. What is the reason for this? The reason is that the heart lacks a meditation practice to guide and train it.

It is said that to see the value in Buddho – the Knower, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One – we have to take up the internal recitation of the mantra ‘Buddho’ and make the heart peaceful. When the heart is tranquil and at peace, then it is awakened within. In what way is it awakened within? The heart is awakened in that it is peaceful, and greed, hatred and delusion cannot enter. In this peaceful state the heart is completely satisfied and is no longer interested in external sense objects. We can recite ‘Buddho’ continuously whatever our posture or activity, be it eating, coming or going, chanting or meditating. If we can keep this up, then our mindfulness will be firm and focused. Buddho and peace will become firmly and inseparably rooted in the heart.

If we do not practise in this way, then our samādhi may weaken and deteriorate. Internally we will lose our cool and composure and become troubled and confused, unable to find any peace. Why does our strength of mind weaken? It weakens because the heart lacks the supervision of a basic meditation object. We must strive to train our heart to realise peace, and maintain this state of mind – freed from all the hindrances – without becoming discouraged. When the peace that is freedom from the hindrances arises we will know the value of the awakened heart; we will see the value in the peace of meditation and in the heart that is radiant and free from the hindrances that distract and disturb it. The value of all these things will become apparent to us. Faith in meditation will arise as well as the confidence that we can maintain continuous mindfulness. Effort and perseverance will also become continuous.

What have been described here are the principles and methods of practice as taught to us by our great teacher Luang Pu Chah. Therefore, let us continuously strive to put these teachings into

practice. This is the way of paying homage to them and bringing forth wisdom. With this wisdom we can analyse this body and mind[13], distinguishing between the elements, the khandhas, the sense bases and so on. As we advance along the path, wisdom will develop, mindfulness will improve and we'll be free from ill-will. We will come to know and see the body and mind in increasing levels of refinement, and this insight will steadily deepen. This is the way to go to abandon greed, hatred and delusion until we clearly know all these internal and external hindrances of heart and mind.

Whenever the heart converges and the factors of the Eightfold Path unify, it is liberated from greed, hatred and delusion. Initially this freedom from greed, hatred and delusion is the experience of tadaṅga vimutti, that is, using insight to temporarily overcome these defilements. Eventually, however, there is the experience of total liberation through the destruction of the fetters that bind that heart to saṃsāra[14]. The defilements of sakkāya diṭṭhi – personality view, vicikicchā – doubt, and sīlappataparāmāsa – attachment to precepts and practices, are destroyed by this unified Path.

Therefore, let's get down to basics, then proceed higher and higher until greed, hatred and delusion fade away and are finished. At this stage knowledge and vision arise, and the heart is completely filled with the awakened awareness that is Buddho together with the genuine peace that comes from the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion.

Coming to practise Dhamma as an offering or an expression of devotion and gratitude[15] means that we recollect the boundless virtues and goodness of the Lord Buddha – the Unsurpassed Teacher of devas

[13] nāma-rūpa
[14] samuccheda-pahāna vimutti
[15] paṭipatti-pūjā

and humans. He is the Buddha – the Knower, the Enlightened One, the Awakened One – and He is Bhagavā; the one who thoroughly explained and expounded the Dhamma until it was realised by others, bringing into being the Sāvaka Saṅgha. This Dhamma revealed by the Buddha has value beyond limits. With the phrase, 'Appamāno Saṅgho' – boundless are the virtues and the goodness of the Saṅgha – we can especially recollect the most venerable Bodhiñāṇa Thera[16] who is dearly respected, revered and venerated by us all.

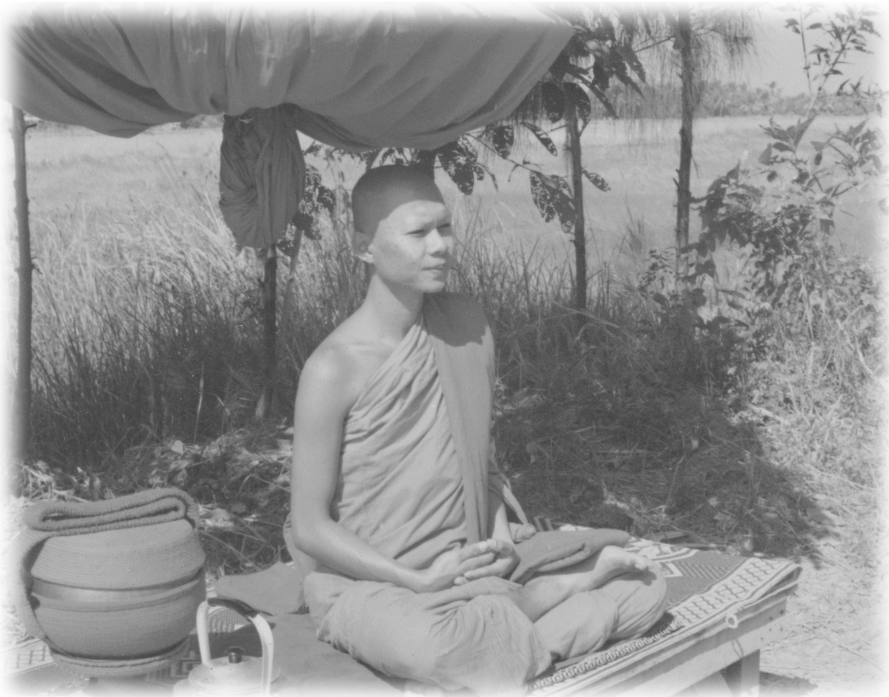
Finally, as a consequence of our respect and reverence for the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, may we be firmly established in virtue and in that which is wholesome. May we prosper and progress, free from obstacles, both in work and in the practice of Dhamma. May we live within the bounds of Buddha-Dhamma until our hearts realise peace together with the wisdom that witnesses the Truth.

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[16] Luang Pu Chah's honorific title.

Maraṇānussati – Keeping the End in Mind.

An abridged version of a farewell Dhamma desanā delivered by Venerable Ajahn Anan at Wat Fah Krahm (Cittabhavanaram), Lamlukka, Patum Thani, in November 1984 (2527 BE) as he prepared to depart to continue his practice in Rayong Province at what would later become his present day residence of Wat Marp Jan. In the course of this talk, Ajahn Anan offers the details of his practice as a gift of Dhamma to gladden and inspire all those who had provided support during the years he spent practising at Wat Fah Krahm.



"When the world is seen according to reality, the Vision of Dhamma arises. This is a profound transformation. The heart is transformed from that of an ordinary person. It changes from a kalyanajana to an Ariyajana; from just, simply 'a good person' to a Noble One."

Today, with the permission of Venerable Ajahn Piak and my friends in Dhamma, the time has come for me to speak about Dhamma practice in the course of which there will be much food for thought to bring into your own practice of meditation. Therefore, let us all be determined to firmly compose the mind, to make it calm and peaceful by trying to focus upon the in-and-out breathing. Meditate feeling content and at ease, allowing the breathing to be comfortable and relaxed.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Buddhaṃ Dhammaṃ Saṅghaṃ namassāmi

Having this opportunity to meet here today is because of our interest in Dhamma and our attempt to practise meditation in accordance with the advice and instruction of the Lord Buddha. Today then is a good opportunity for me to speak the truth about my own practice. Today seems the right occasion to speak because for all of us to be sitting here, having lived this far, is indeed a rarity. Perhaps next year, or in the years ahead, we will not have the chance to meet together or see each other again. This or that person may have left us, some to other places, some because old age prevents them from coming, and some

because of death. Therefore, the Buddha taught us that our lives are uncertain; death is for sure. It is certain we must die; our lives will end in death. When we foresee the danger in life's uncertainty, we become one who is heedful.

The Buddha stated that the one who is heedful never dies. "Appamādo amatapadaṃ, pamādo maccuno padaṃ" – heedfulness is the path to the deathless; the one who is heedless is dead already. Such people, although still alive and sitting, standing or walking, are said to have already died because they are dead to virtue and to goodness, to merit and to that which is wholesome. However, all of us sitting here can be described as 'heedful'; trying to be interested and attentive in the practice of Dhamma that will brighten, cleanse and purify our hearts in accordance with our efforts. Death therefore, can become a wellspring of Dhamma. The Buddha informed us that the mind of one who frequently contemplates death will become heedful of the truth, recollecting the impermanence, suffering and selflessness of this body. Just this subject of death then, can become a basis for our meditation, a foundation for our practice that we cannot overlook.

If we frequently practise maraṇānussati – contemplating death as a meditation theme – our minds will become heedful of life's uncertainty and the certainty of death. We have to die for sure; this life will end in death. Some people, after conception, die in the womb. Others pass away after a couple of months or a couple of years, or after reaching the age of ten or twenty. This we can observe for ourselves. Our human lifespan therefore, is uncertain. Some die young and others die old. If we contemplate death in this way, then whatever power and prestige one may possess, whatever riches, rank and renown, whether a prince or a pauper, a beggar or a billionaire, even great and mighty kings, we can see that death grants no exemptions. Even our Supremely Enlightened Lord Buddha, the Mahāpurisa, The

Champion of the World, the refuge of all beings, fully endowed with the virtues of wisdom, great compassion, moral discipline and absolute purity; even the life of that Sublime One's body was crushed by death. Will we then, as ordinary people not yet possessing the wisdom, purity, power and might of a Buddha, escape death and the danger inherent in death? Will we not have to be parted from all that we love and delight in? I myself will not escape death; it is beyond the ability of anyone. I consider my life to be uncertain whereas death is a certainty. Consequently, everyone in this world is in the same predicament, nobody can escape from death. Death will envelop us all, ending in separation from everything we love and cherish.

All our wealth and possessions are gained with great difficulty. Some people amass a great stash but are afraid to put it to use, whereas others are thrifty misers and horde their wealth away. When they pass on, these goods and riches are unable to bring them any benefits. Why do we act like this? Because, like children playing in the garden as a blazing fire approaches, we do not yet see the danger closing in. Most of us are like these children having fun and frolics; we are unaware of the threat, unaware of the danger closing in, creeping slowly, relentlessly upon us second by second, minute by minute, that is, old age, sickness and death. In the end, death comes to separate us from our bodies. However, it does not just part us from our own bodies; it also parts us from our children and spouses, our parents and relatives. Death separates and takes away that which we most love. How is it possible that death can take these things away from us? For the reason that these things are not within our power to control. Separation through death is a natural law; the law of death is a force of nature.

After hearing the Teaching of the Buddha, Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña saw the truth because he understood how all things naturally arise and pass away. The meaning of 'all things' here is

'everything that exists'; everything that is subject to the conditions of impermanence, suffering and not-self, where no self or soul or person or being or 'me' or 'you' can be found. Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña saw his body as impermanent, suffering and not-self, as arising and ceasing, as 'being without a Being'. When one understands these natural conditions, as did Aññā Koṇḍañña, it is called attaining the 'Vision of Dhamma', that is, he saw the physical body according to reality. When the world is seen according to reality, the Vision of Dhamma arises. This is a profound transformation. The heart is transformed from that of an ordinary person. It changes from a kalyāṇajana to an Ariyajana; from just, simply 'a good person' to a Noble One.

When the Dhamma is seen, it is just this Dhamma which makes the heart noble. How is it that the heart becomes noble by seeing the Dhamma? It is because of being heedful like Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña. Before the Buddha's enlightenment, Venerable Koṇḍañña was diligent in serving and ministering to the Bodhisatta for six years. However, after he saw the Buddha-to-be partake of nourishing food, Venerable Koṇḍañña shunned him and ran away believing it unlikely that the Buddha would attain to any lofty spiritual realisation. Although Venerable Koṇḍañña renounced the Bodhisatta, he did not abandon his own practice. He was possessed of faith and having already put forth effort to build and perfect spiritual qualities, he realised that by continuing to cultivate Dhamma in this way, his heart would likely gain a firm spiritual foundation, a natural source of confidence and purity.

Therefore, I would like to encourage you all to thoroughly investigate this subject of death. The contemplation of death, skilfully cultivated as a basic meditation practice, naturally brings many benefits. All anxiety, worry and worldly concerns will inevitably be

eliminated from our hearts as a matter of course. For this reason then, we should all put forth effort in our meditation and try to make the investigation and contemplation of death firm in our minds. Try to develop this meditation as much as possible, investigating with determination and resolution for the sake of results.

Sometimes, during our investigation of death, the heart experiences sudden flashes of saṃvega, a profound sadness with the sobering insight that life is uncertain, and that if we are destined to die, then nothing is worth clinging onto. With the arising of saṃvega in the heart like this, it can be said that our contemplation of the meditation theme is correct and proper. If our mind experiences sudden moments of calm which then turns into wayward thinking, this shows that the mind is concentrated to the level of khaṇika samādhi. If the calm in the mind goes deeper than this which, when applied to the contemplation of the meditation theme, arouses feelings of saṃvega and spiritual rapture – the saṃvega arising only momentarily leaving behind an experience of deep bliss, peace and serenity – then this indicates that the mind is entering upacāra samādhi. This is a samādhi which is 'almost solid', sustained for long periods of time and where body and mind are light and tranquil.

If we use our minds to frequently contemplate in this way, then solid concentration will arise as a matter of course. This can be called 'cultivating wisdom to develop samādhi'. That is to say, we contemplate using the mind to see impermanence, suffering and not-self; to see that this body will have to die. To arouse the theme of death in the mind, we must use our memory of those things we have heard and remembered to guide our contemplation. As the mind converges, it gradually calms down, advancing in stages from khaṇika samādhi to upacāra samādhi. As proficiency in samādhi increases, the

contemplation of death becomes more skilful and effortless accordingly.

In my own practice, I used maraṇānussati – the contemplation of death – as my first basic theme of meditation. I made an effort to recollect death all the time. For example, sometimes I would watch children playing football, observing their delight in the world and their experience of pleasant, desirable moods. I would reflect, "These our bodies cannot be taken for granted. Do those people who come looking for entertainment and distraction realise that death is creeping up on them? I, too, am no exception. If I could die right now, or at any moment, then why do I allow myself to seek only delight and distraction in the world?

When I opened a newspaper and saw the daily announcements that this or that person had died and that the funeral chanting would be conducted in such a monastery at such and such a time, then I would reflect that these people, although all of rank, fame and fortune, they still had to meet with death and disaster. Previously they were alive just as I am now, and in the end, like them, I naturally will have to die. Contemplating in this way, the mind became calm and saṃvega arose. This is called making an effort to develop the recollection of death as a basic meditation practice.

In my practice, I continually put forth effort to develop the meditation on death. For the first four years I was still developing the contemplation of death as my main theme of meditation. At the start of my fourth rains retreat, I began to investigate the aspect of mindfulness practice known as kāyagatā, that is, the contemplation of the body for the purpose of eliminating desire and attraction towards it. When I reviewed the body in my mind, then whichever part or aspect appeared as desirable, I would try to contemplate right there. I would pluck off

the nose or ears, pop the eyes out and bash in the mouth. Whenever the eye made contact with external forms, whether my own body or those of others, I put forth effort contemplating in this way to cut off any desire. At the end of that year, following my fourth rains retreat, I began the practice of asubha kammaṭṭhāna; contemplating the body from the perspective of its unattractive or repulsive nature. When on alms round in the countryside, I tried to observe people's hands, contemplating the wrinkled skin of the elderly as they placed food offerings in my bowl. I would then try to remember this image by creating a mental picture in my mind.

I made a continuous effort to practise asubha kammaṭṭhāna but my mediation was still not very good until the beginning of my sixth rains retreat. At that time I began investigating the repulsive aspect of the body with earnestness. I only began seriously meditating on asubha at this time for the reason that, since ordaining, I had harboured a deep-seated notion that I should not really apply myself to this practice until after five years as a monk had passed. This idea held up my practice of body contemplation. I don't know how this view became embedded in the mind like this, but it ended up going this way; after my fifth rains retreat and before the beginning of my sixth, I did start to sincerely investigate asubha following this impression.

The contemplation of the skin was assigned to me as a meditation theme by my teacher with the confident assurance that this contemplation would bring the heart to liberation, quelling all greed, hatred and delusion. Initially I was doubtful about body contemplation because the traditional meditation on the thirty-two parts seemed too lengthy and cumbersome to practise. I didn't know which meditation subject was most suited to my temperament or which of these kammaṭṭhāna would dispel greed, hatred and delusion from my heart. This uncertainty remained until just before my sixth rains retreat when,

while sitting in meditation, a nimitta arose that made up my mind for sure. This was an asubha-nimitta where the skin was seen as disintegrating, flaking and peeling away. My perception of this mental image was dependent upon the spiritual power[1] of my teacher. Through this assistance, I was able to perceive the asubha-nimitta at that moment because having entered upacāra samādhi, the heart was receptive to signs and visions.

With confidence in both the nimitta and asubha meditation on the skin established, I was unwavering in my effort to practise, firmly holding the meditation object in mind. I strove to investigate, making the mind concentrated. Sometimes I detached and peeled the skin away from the body revealing the flesh beneath. This gave rise to saṃvega – feelings of profound sobriety – and the mind would become still. After emerging from that state of calm, I would contemplate the skin making it shrivel up and disintegrate.

In the beginning, gradually learning to incline the mind towards contemplation is a difficult and arduous practice. When in samādhi, the mind is unified without thoughts arising; it has been stilled and brought to singleness. There is no duality, only a unified state of awareness. Through the power of concentration, I would contemplate the skin, peeling it away from the hands, feet, lips and face and change it into earth. I would break the skin into tiny pieces and turn it into earth, alter its state into that of soil.

Initially, I could only make it into earth; I couldn't break it apart any more than that. Later on, when the mind had made more progress and concentration was deeper, after turning the skin into earth, I could then make this earth crumble away and completely vanish to nothing. The

[1] pārami

investigation went from skin to soil, from dirt to dust, breaking it apart like this into what is called the state of emptiness. I could see that in this state, skin does not exist. Initially the skin existed, and then it changed its state into earth, then nothingness. The realisation then arose in the heart; skin is anattā, not a soul, not a self, it is simply empty.

When the heart realised that skin is empty, pīti – spiritual rapture – arose and the body and the mind temporarily disengaged. There was awareness that the mind had disengaged and withdrawn from the body and from attachment to this physical form. Just this is magga – the path; the way of practice for the eradication of greed, hatred and delusion. Once the path is seen in this way, then greed, hatred and delusion begin to fade away because it is just this experience of magga that destroys these defilements, leaving the heart awakened and invigorated. It is like previously, we had only heard the teachers talk about unifying the mind before investigating the body but now we know for ourselves, "Oh! It's just like they said!" The heart becomes a witness to the truth, the body seen according to reality, there are no longer any doubts; this is the way! The path entering the 'stream of Dhamma' starts to become clear.

At that time however, the heart was only just beginning to recognise the path, it had not yet changed. The experience of magga here was only enough to see that this was the right way. When I practised in this way, feelings of deep rapture and contentment arose, and I could let go of the body. Great confidence arose, "This is the way all previous practitioners have come! All those who practised well came by this route!" I was absolutely certain that this was the way to liberation from suffering. Although I had only gained knowledge of the path of practice, I was still greatly encouraged.

I practised continuously, repeatedly investigating the skin back and forth. Whenever I saw other people I would always maintain silence, continuing my contemplation, keeping the mind calm and concentrated. Making an effort to restrain one's speech is essential. I am quite a garrulous person and so, during my sixth rains retreat, I tried to avoid speaking altogether. During this period, I spoke as little as possible because if I talked a lot, then the mind would not remain concentrated. Lengthy conversations would lead to much restless thinking so that when I came to sit meditation, the mind would not calm down. Therefore, I practised restraint. My teacher urged and instructed us to speak little, sleep little and eat little, but when we don't see the harm in indulgence, then practising in this way is difficult. However, during my sixth rains retreat, I saw the harmful consequences in unrestrained speech and so I put forth effort to speak as little as possible. When I spoke less and my mind was contained and composed, then samādhi was firmer. For this reason it is taught that sīla is a condition for the arising of samādhi.

When samādhi became firmer and more focused, I practised contemplating the skin as dhātu – fundamental elements – making it disintegrate into emptiness. In a short time, I became more skilful and proficient at letting go of the body, seeing it as anattā, aniccaṃ and dukkhaṃ respectively. As I viewed things in this light more and more with deepening profundity, my resourcefulness and understanding continuously increased. My teacher urged me to strive for proficiency in my contemplation, that is, for nothing less than expertise in the field of investigation and analysis.

I continued to practise in this way until the end of the rains retreat. However, sometimes when contemplating the skin, weariness would set in and I would have to change my practice and turn towards other

objects of contemplation instead, such as the bones. When the mind was peaceful, I put forth continuous effort contemplating the skin.

On 28th December 1981, I was sitting in meditation and when the mind had emerged from its concentrated state, I began to contemplate the skin, peeling it away from the lips. No sooner had the skin dropped to the ground than the heart realised, instantaneously, that skin is not-self . . . Just seeing the skin alone with insight was enough to see deeply throughout the whole body because it is of the same nature, composed of the same fundamental elements. Whatever fundamental element is seen with clarity, then the entire physical body is also clearly perceived in this light and the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion steadily diminish.

Following this, my confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha greatly increased . . . The heart was steady and possessed of enormous faith whatever the passing mood or mental state. Supposing someone was to tell me to kill an animal saying, “If you don’t kill this creature then I’ll murder you!” The mind, though, would have already been made up, the heart would have already come to an agreement because it has clearly seen the body as aniccaṃ – dukkhaṃ – anattā; no longer will it permit the performance of unwholesome deeds or submit to acts of evil. The path that leads to the lower realms of torment and misery through the performance of evil, unskilful actions has been shut and sealed. How does it come to be shut and sealed? It is just this heart that seals itself off. It happens by itself because sīla enters and abides in the heart.

Prior to December 28th, my practice of sīla was just an outward form, the use of precepts to discipline conduct in body and speech. Then on this day . . . the practice of sīla became an internal affair of the heart. The heart became disciplined inside, able to discriminate between right

and wrong without the need for external precepts. For example, sometimes I would do something wrong but with the mind calm and peaceful, it would know that that act was unwholesome. The heart had attained to balance and security and so I was always on the right path, where evil is gradually and steadily abandoned . . .

Following on from this, my meditation proceeded smoothly without obstacles and with a clear understanding of the path of practice. I continued to strive in the investigation of the physical body, contemplating the skin in terms of its elemental properties. Through the power of samādhi focused on the body, I would cause these elements to disintegrate and vanish until the body was seen as anattā.

Sometimes in the course of my meditation, weariness with the object of contemplation would set in, and so I would change my focus. For example, if I became bored contemplating the skin on the hands, then I would move to the chest or head or imagine the skin splattered with blood, making it disintegrate and vanish, revealing its selfless nature. I needed to have flexibility as a skilful means in my investigation. This, however, is an individual matter because each person is different. I would reflect that sometimes, when investigating the same meditation theme, the heart doesn't want to do the work; it becomes dull and boring like eating just one type of food. When the heart became bored, I would have to be flexible, changing and adjusting my meditation so that the heart could see the body with insight as anattā.

As my practice approached the month of September 1982, the heart began to find deep contentment through the development of the four brahmavihārā. Quite simply, I loved cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, appreciation and equanimity[2]. My experience of these

[2] Mettā, karuṇā, muditā and upekkhā.

'divine abidings' was different from before in that, although the heart often dwelt in these states, they had not as yet become a firm or constant presence. As soon as I entered September of that year however, the heart found deep satisfaction through the cultivation of these sublime emotions. Meanwhile, my investigation of the body continued with the contemplation of the blood.

One point of practice that I had to make an effort to refine concerned being reserved and restrained in speech, in sleep and in the senses. Luang Por Chah would instruct us in 'the mode of practice that is never wrong'[3], that is, restraining the senses from like and dislike, restraint from overindulgence in sleep by arousing energy, and restraint in the consumption of food. I tried hard to practise in this way, making an effort to restrain my speech. This is essential because garrulousness leads the heart away from peace and causes samādhi to degenerate and without samādhi, there is no insight. I continued to strive in the way described until the end of that year, 1982.

At the beginning of the year 1983, I became more skilled in the practice of the brahmavihārā. The investigation of the physical body – the kāyasaṅkhāra – continued with the skin as the main theme of meditation. I strove to investigate just this single theme back and forth, shifting and alternating between the skin of the feet, head, chest, hands, lips and face. I would investigate the repulsive aspects of the female body, focusing deep inside on the intestines, kidneys, liver and lungs. Whatever devices or techniques others may have employed in their meditation, those described here were the skilful means that I used in the course of my investigation into the physical body.

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[3] apaṇṇaka paṭipadā

I had to put forth a consistent effort, not just fits and starts. I was convinced that there was nothing higher than unremitting effort; relinquishing all in the attempt to find the time and opportunity to strive resolutely in practice. I tried to contemplate all external objects as anattā, making them vanish away. Sometimes I would contemplate those things that I used to consider valuable, such as diamonds. When they disintegrate, diamonds are no different from earth. In the mind's eye, I would change them into earth, break them down into soil and then see how this earth combined and compressed over time to form diamonds. I investigated strenuously to cut off attraction towards worldly things.

Each time I contemplated the body, any attachment towards it would be removed from the heart along with the delight that accompanies clinging to this physical form. The power of greed, hatred and delusion was steadily undermined and weakened. The heart became absorbed in the practice, blissful, tranquil and at ease. There were no feelings of weariness, only the need to practise for the sake of liberation. Sometimes if I happened to see a beautiful woman, then in my mind's eye her body would become bloated and swollen, splitting apart until it disintegrated and was seen as anattā in accordance with reality.

As my practice entered June of 1983, close to the rains retreat, a desire to accelerate its efforts arose within the heart as though it longed to be finished with its work once and for all; to go all-out in practice. There was an urgency to accelerate my efforts and diminish the power of lust, anger and delusion[4] in the heart. Consequently, I took leave of Ajahn Piak and Ajahn Dtan and went to spend the rains retreat at Ban Mee – Noodle Village. After several days at Ban Mee I began to strive in earnest until, one day, the mind became very peaceful . . .

[4] Rāga, dosa and moha.

When the mind had withdrawn from this experience, I listened to a tape of Luang Por Chah teaching on the subject of existence and birth[5]. Luang Por pointed out that whatever we attach to, will define our mode of existence and subsequent rebirth, which will, in turn, be a cause of suffering. At that time, I hadn't been performing the daily monastic duty of the morning and evening chanting. The heart had no desire to chant or recite; it only wanted to increase its efforts in meditation. However, while listening to Luang Por Chah, I reflected that the reason my heart was squirming and feeling ill-at-ease at that moment was just because of this desire not to do any chanting. After reflecting in this way, the heart admitted to this truth and agreed to do the chanting. At that moment, it was as if something fell away or detached itself from the heart giving rise to a deep rapture, the heart feeling light, free and unburdened.

I felt completely immersed in bliss for the duration of that day. Around midnight or one in the morning, the mind was still wide awake despite having not slept all night . . . The fruit that arose from my practice on that occasion still remains with me right up to today. The heart became calm and peaceful with the awareness that my practice had risen to another level of freedom. After June 20th 1983 the heart began to feel relief from the defilements of lust, anger and delusion. In the period of practice between December 28th and June 20th, the heart became much more at ease than it had ever been before. The heart was deeply contented and care-free, and the practice was slowly and steadily improving, becoming easier and more thorough.

At the end of October of that year, I was continuing with the contemplation of the body as elements. On one occasion, instead of

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[5] bhava and jāti

investigating the skin like before, the mind penetrated right through to the bones, seeing them disintegrate as anattā. Following on from this, I would repeatedly contemplate the body as an elemental experience of earth, air, fire and water. In a meticulous investigation of increasing refinement and profundity, the body was seen as elements disbanding and disintegrating; seen as anattā.

After contemplation as dhātu, the body would separate out into its various elemental components; fine dust, a stream of water, eddies or bubbles of air, swirling tongues of fire. As the investigation deepened from the coarse to the refined, these elements would, in turn, disband and disintegrate until the body was seen as mere atoms vanishing away, completely ending in anattā.

In order to investigate the body as elements, uproot attachment to them as self and realise anattā, samādhi must have reached the level of Third Jhāna, accessing the power of sukha. In the serenity of Third Jhāna, pīti has been abandoned leaving only sukha and upekkhā. When the mind emerges from the stillness of Third Jhāna, then the investigation has the power to destroy the conditioned perception of the elements as self. If samādhi has not reached the level of Third Jhāna, then the investigation will be unable to demolish and destroy the attachment to the elements as one's self. Because this defiled conditioning is deeply ingrained, it requires an equally deep samādhi before this kilesa can be destroyed. Therefore, for the investigation to penetrate deep within, it must be paired with deep samādhi.

I investigated the attachment to the elements back and forth until the beginning of January 1984. At this time the investigation turned towards those mental images and perceptions that the mind would store away as memories. For example, when the eye saw physical forms, saññā – the memory – would make a mental note and store

them away. These memories and perceptions are deeply ingrained in the mind. When I sat in meditation they would arise and reveal themselves. In my investigation, I now had to strive to purify the heart from attraction and aversion based on these memories and perceptions.

When distorted and deluded perceptions of beauty arose, the mind had to counter and undermine them by creating perceptions of the ugly and unattractive. At that time, I thought that the kilesas arose from the physical senses of the body, the eye, the ear and so forth. These various sense-bases are the focal point where arisen sense impressions are received. I believed that by getting rid of attachment to these senses, then whenever experiencing sights, sounds, smells and flavours, there would no longer be any feelings of attraction or aversion towards these sense-objects.

When I sat in meditation, mental images would arise. Pictures of those things that the heart was attached to would manifest within the mind. Some had an appealing and attractive quality to them; others were enticing and seductive, sometimes drawing the heart into strongly binding infatuations. Craving and defilement were cunningly disguised as mental images embedded within the heart. They would manifest and entice in all manner of ways. After regarding these mental images, the heart would conceive them as appealing and become attached.

When the mind had sufficient strength, the investigation would turn towards the body. Whatever part of the body would appear in these mental images, I would contemplate right there. For example, if an image of the face arose, then I would contemplate the face. I would contemplate the senses of the face, such as the faculty of sight, as

anattā. Investigating this 'body within the body'[6], a mental representation of attachment between the senses and their objects arose within the mind, perceived as a network of white nerve-like filaments. This 'sensory web', in which each filament was different, then disintegrated as anattā. Whenever I perceived an attractive object to which I was attached, then this 'sensory web' would manifest within my mind and I would contemplate all these attachments as anattā. That is to say, whenever these mental images arose within the mind, I would contemplate that aspect of my body or the female body that I was attached to in these visions causing it to disintegrate and become empty of self.

I repeatedly investigated this subject until the end of February. Sometimes, I would see the body as anattā, shattering apart. Within the mind there were mental images of both the beautiful and the repulsive. The repulsive mental images were those I had created to oppose those other images within the mind that I perceived as beautiful. Internally, I had fully developed the perception of the repulsive to counter and correct the memories and perceptions of beauty in the mind. I contemplated all these memories and perceptions as completely anattā. I was no longer fixated upon these memories and perceptions whether of the beautiful or the repulsive because, although they are real and exist within the mind, their reality is impermanent, stressful and without a self.

As I contemplated both these conditions – the beautiful and the repulsive – as anattā, I knew that I had brought my practice of asubha kammaṭṭhāna to completion. I was no longer swayed by the perceptions of beauty created within the mind because the heart could

[6] 'Body within the body', that is, the experience of the body and sensory contact from the 'inside' as elementary feelings or, in other words, the body and sensory contact experienced as they present themselves directly to inner awareness.

now balance them with perceptions of the repulsive in an even match. Consequently, the heart became bold and confident.

Although subtle attraction still arose with sensory contact, it was not necessary to analyze external forms because this attraction was too refined to contemplate in this way. When the eye contacted forms, for example, subtle desire would arise and so the mind would note down that sense object and store it away as a memory. When I sat in meditation, these memories would arise and the mind would create perceptions of the repulsive to counterbalance them. Therefore, during this period in February 1984, it no longer became necessary to investigate externally. There was no need to contemplate objects outside of myself. I only needed to put forth effort to maintain mindfulness and samādhi. When I was peaceful, the heart would destroy these mistaken perceptions of beauty all by itself. Consequently, the heart became much more free and at ease than before.

On the 20th of February, I was sitting in meditation when a nimitta arose. On that day, the mind was most extraordinary having been calm for many days previous. As I was meditating, a mental image of a person arose. However, when the mind focused upon it, this nimitta began to rotate. The mind then focused back upon my own body using this rotating image to uproot the perception of self. With my eyes closed, I saw a mental image of my body spinning like a top or a tornado. As it whirled around, I saw the four elements spinning together, merging into unity, until finally shattering and scattering into fragments. The mind saw the body as anattā; it realised that this physical form is not a self.

While meditating one day in April, the mind entered samādhi and became completely empty. Both the breathing and hearing ceased. The

mind was very refined, entering into complete emptiness. This had never at all happened before. After the mind had emerged from this state, the body was seen as completely empty. The mind automatically separated from the body which then disintegrated all by itself in a way that was considerably more refined than ever before. Everything was seen as completely empty. Trees, mountains, monasteries, meeting halls – all of them empty. Even when these things were not conventionally speaking, 'empty', the heart, through the power of samādhi, clearly knew that they were of the nature to be empty. With samādhi completely firm, 'the knowing' manifested as wisdom. Together, samādhi and wisdom bring results in this way.

With this experience of emptiness, there was a deeper understanding of the Dhamma and the nature of this physical body . . . After withdrawing, having realised this state, the heart experienced considerably more bliss and contentment than on any other occasion in the practice up to that point. The heart had increased in refinement and profundity once more.

After contemplating anattā through the power of appanā samādhi, the heart can sometimes remain in this state of emptiness for six or seven days. If a person is deluded or not fully aware, they might grasp this state – as long as it does not degenerate – to be that of the Arahant. I have seen others who, experiencing this state of emptiness, mistakenly take it to be that of the Arahant . . .

As I continued to practise, my mind became wondrous. After withdrawing from meditation, many insights into ultimate reality[7] would arise. Sometimes, observing the breath coming in and out, the mind would know that the body is anattā. Sometimes, the body would

[7] Sabhāva Dhamma

be seen as though it were a coating of rust flaking away; as not-self. At other times, the body would be seen with insight into each layer of the skin, beginning with the outermost and reaching right down to the bones, this awareness piercing straight through the body and out the other side. Investigating the body over a period of ten days, each layer was seen as anattā.

When sitting in meditation, the mind would focus upon the skin, penetrating through from the outermost to each and every layer. It was as though awareness passed through the body in a flash, seeing it all in fine detail right down to the bones before shooting through outside. This body would then be seen as anattā. This is called the arising of insight into ultimate reality. Due to the power of samādhi, the mind took-up these insights as its object so as to uproot the desire and aversion towards the body. The nature of this Dhamma that arises will be different for each person depending on the strength of their spiritual maturity[8] or previous training. These insights into ultimate reality arise only to enable us to understand that the body is anattā; neither a self nor a soul.

Following on from this, entering the month of May, although there was awareness of attraction and repulsion towards contact with external sensory objects, these perceptions no longer had any power over the mind. Although these perceptions remained within the mind the same as before, their impermanent nature had been seen. They would arise and cease with great rapidity and the desire that arose in conjunction with these perceptions, of beauty for example, would also suddenly cease. Mindful awareness of the arising and ceasing of this desire and aversion was automatic. Even though the memory would still implant these perceptions deep within the mind as before, the

[8] pārami

mind was bold and unwavering because they no longer had any power over it. When the mind was calm and still, it could balance these perceptions of attraction and repulsion all by itself.

When the mind was peaceful, wisdom would arise, sometimes contemplating and seeing the body as anattā, sometimes contemplating kamma. I would see that all beings are the owners of their kamma and must experience its results. That is to say, when they act upon intention, whether skilfully or harmfully, all beings are the owners of their actions. This kamma does not belong to another and its results must be experienced. Whether beings experience happiness or suffering, it is just because of their kamma bearing fruit. Seeing into this matter, it provided instructive material enabling the heart to let go of attachment; to abandon its fixation on the body – just this much.

I continued practising in this way until June, gaining insights into ultimate reality, and training the heart to see anattā. On the day before Luang Por Chah's birthday, many monks and novices had gathered at Wat Nong Pah Pong to pay their respects to the teacher. In the evening, as they pushed Luang Por outside in his wheelchair, my mind converged and so I closed my eyes. As soon as the eyes opened again, I saw Luang Por and all those sitting around him with insight in terms of the three characteristics. I saw that the monks and novices, right down to myself, were all of the same nature. The mind then saw the body disintegrate as anattā.

Following on from this, I had feelings of profound weariness towards all experience of the sensory world. I felt deep disenchantment towards all sensory experiences, whether sights, sounds, odours, flavours or bodily sensations. I wished to be completely free from attachment to these things once and for all. The

heart had no wish to be bound up with sensory experience. I continued to practise in this way until the end of June 1984.

In as much of my practice as I have related here, in conclusion, it is enough to say that I put forth effort, keeping a solid foundation in sīla. As a layman I practised generosity. I would consider; "My life is uncertain, whereas death is a certainty. I surely will have to die; my life will end in death. If death is coming, then what's the point of amassing wealth and possessions? Regardless of how much I make plans to save, or become self-made and secure, life is uncertain. Sometimes the money and assets that I have sought out are not even put to use." Consequently, I tried to practise dāna and establish myself in this quality of generosity and self-sacrifice. I gave freely of my resources on a regular basis until, one day, I asked myself why I was working considering I gave most of my monthly wage away as gifts or offerings using only the little that remained to support myself. I reflected; "What's the reason for working if I give away all that I make? Its better I ordain and seek freedom from suffering."

I put forth effort in practising generosity to establish myself in noble spiritual qualities. When I performed deeds of generosity, gradually the heart became more self-sacrificing and the power of selfish greed was restrained. Consequently, my heart conceived the wish to ordain; I no longer wanted to earn a living. A worldly person would call such individuals feeble, labelling them as life's losers. However, for those following the way of Dhamma, such wishes and wants are called, 'seeing the danger in the cycle of death and rebirth.' The danger is seen in that, although our good deeds lead on to goodness, acts of evil plunge us down the abyss to a hellish birth, becoming animals, demons or hungry ghosts, where there is total suffering and misery. Consequently, not taking birth is more favourable. It is better to seek freedom from suffering, to strive in the quest for liberation.

I will soon be travelling to Rayong Province and will probably take-up residence there. As a monk and a samaṇa refraining from the pursuit of wealth, I have nothing except the Dhamma teachings of the Lord Buddha and my own practice of meditation with which to repay the kindness of all the lay supporters here at Lamlukka. Every one of you faithful devotees has always made your best effort to attentively support the monks and novices. If I had not sincerely practised, it is likely I would be unable to repay this karmic debt. Initially in my practice, aware of this indebtedness, I was wary and apprehensive when I saw faithful supporters bringing the four requisites[9] to offer. However, I tried hard practising to make myself noble and worthy so that all my supporters would find peace and contentment. Consequently, seeing the faith of all the lay supporters here at Lamlukka, I rejoice in your goodness and in your wholesome aspirations.

Finally, may the power of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha aid and assist all of you sitting here, and all those who come to make merit here at Lamlukka. May your hearts be calm and serene, firm in samādhi, shining bright. May you all abandon evil, do that which is good and purify the heart, freeing it from suffering and arousing the vision of Dhamma.

[9] The basic supports of life – food, shelter, clothing and medicine.



Glossary

ānāpānasati	‘Mindfulness of breathing’; the meditation practice of focusing awareness on the sensation of breathing (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
anattā	Not-self; the emptiness of all phenomena i.e. empty of an ultimate self or soul. One of the *Three Characteristics* of all conditioned phenomena.
anicca /aniccaṃ	Impermanence; instability; transience. One of the *Three Characteristics* of all conditioned phenomena.
Aññā Koṇḍañña	The Lord Buddha’s first bhikkhu disciple and the first such disciple to realise enlightenment.
appanā samādhi	Full absorption samādhi. A technical meditation term used to describe a state of full concentration or complete absorption into a meditation object (see *jhāna*). However, unless otherwise stated, this term is used by teachers in Thai forest monasteries only in reference to Fourth Jhāna, also referred to as ‘the base of samādhi’.
Arahant	A Fully Enlightened One. One who has totally eradicated the mental defilements (kilesa) that bind the heart to the cycle of death and rebirth. As such, the Arahant has transcended birth, death and the suffering inherent in existence (see *Enlightenment*).
Ariyajana	A ‘Noble One’ i.e. one who has realised any of the stages of enlightenment beginning with Stream-entry (see *Enlightenment*).
Ariya Saṅgha	The enlightened disciples of the Lord Buddha.
Asubha-kammaṭṭhāna	The meditation practice of contemplating the body from the perspective of its unattractive or repulsive nature for the purpose of eliminating desire and attraction towards it.

asubha-nimitta	A vivid mental image or vision of a body part or organ – or else of a decomposing corpse – that arises during the development of the meditation on the loathsomeness of the body when samādhi has reached a certain level of depth and stability.
avijjā	Ignorance. Avijjā is unawareness of Ultimate Truth and manifests as the deluded tendency towards a subject and object perception of reality. Consequently, avijjā is what brings into being the self and the world. Therefore, the experience of desire and aversion and the resultant suffering created by these self-centred defilements, has avijjā as its origin and source.
bhava	Existence; becoming; renewal of being.
bhikkhu	A Buddhist monk. A fully ordained member of the *Saṅgha*.
bodhi-pakkhiya dhammas	The 37 Enlightenment Factors; a comprehensive list of wholesome virtues and skilful applications of body, speech and mind that condition the heart towards the realisation of enlightenment.
Bodhisatta	(Sanskrit = Bodhisattva) One who has made a Great Vow to realise enlightenment for the happiness and welfare of all beings. Specifically used in reference to the prince and ascetic Siddhattha Gotama before his enlightenment as the Buddha.
brahma gods	Heavenly beings composed of purest light. Existence in such a state is a natural consequence of the mastery of jhāna samādhi. The brahma realms are the ontological counterparts to advanced stages of development in sīla, samādhi and paññā. Such a blissful state of existence is, of course, impermanent.
brahmavihāra	Literally, 'divine abidings'; those states that result in perfect emotional balance and which are the expression of an 'enlightened personality': 1.Mettā – loving kindness; 2. Karuṇā – compassion; 3. Muditā – appreciation, joy at others' success; 4. Upekkhā – equanimity; skilfully recognising the limits of one's ability and letting go.

Buddhasāsana	The Teachings of the Buddha; the Buddhist religion; 'Buddhism'.
Buddho	(1.) Awakened or enlightened awareness; the 'one who knows'. Buddho is the heart's intuitive awareness – or intrinsic knowing nature – that sees conventional reality and ultimate reality simultaneously and is liberated from attachment to either. (2.) A meditation mantra which, through constant mental repetition, can bring the mind to samādhi (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
cāga	Self-sacrifice, giving up.
dāna	Generosity, charity.
devas	Celestial beings. Existence in such a refined and blissful state is directly related to purity of heart through the development of virtue, samādhi and wisdom. Such a happy state of existence is, of course, impermanent.
Dhamma	The unconditioned state of perfect harmony beyond the conventions of existence and non-existence; Ultimate Truth and the teaching and principles of this Truth; the Teaching of the Buddha. The Dhamma also refers to the wholesome qualities of body, speech and mind which need to be developed in order to realise this Truth.
dhamma	Mental phenomena; qualities or states of mind.
Dhamma desanā	A talk or sermon on the theory and practice of the Buddhist teachings.
Dhammo	A meditation mantra which, through constant mental repetition, can bring the mind to samādhi (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
dhātu	Fundamental elements; the most basic constituents or expression of physical experience i.e. earth-solidity, water-cohesion, air-motion and fire-temperature.
divine abidings	See *brahmavihāra*.

dosa — Anger; aversion; hatred (see *kilesa*).

dukkha /dukkhaṃ — Literally, ‘that which is hard to bear’. The term *dukkha* encompasses not only the unsatisfactoriness that arises as a consequence of existence (including all forms of mental and physical suffering), but also the tension that arises due to the impermanent and selfless nature of experience, hence even happiness is dukkha because it cannot be sustained. Ultimately it refers to the inherent stressful and unsustainable nature of existence itself. Dukkha is one of the *Three Characteristics* of all conditioned phenomena.

ekaggatā — Unified consciousness without subject-object duality (see *jhāna*).

Enlightenment — The ultimate goal of Buddhist training and practice. Many words and phrases express this transcendent experience of Awakening, for example:
Vimutti – freedom or liberation i.e. from the mental defilements of greed, hatred and delusion; *Nibbāna* – literally, ‘extinguished’ i.e. the fires of greed, hatred and delusion have gone out; The *Deathless* or *Unconditioned*, that is, the heart is free from the conditions that bind it to conventional reality. Enlightenment is traditionally defined in terms of the abandoning of ten underlying defilements of heart and mind that fetter or bind it to the cycle of death and rebirth and the suffering experienced therein (see *saṃsāra*). These *Ten Fetters* are abandoned in four successive stages referred to as *magga-phala – path and fruit.*
Magga refers to the practice of developing virtue, samādhi and wisdom in levels of increasing refinement, where these Ten Fetters are gradually uprooted. The experience of *phala* marks the point where their abandoning is irreversible or complete.
Sotāpatti-magga is the practice-path ‘*Entering the Stream*’ of enlightenment. *Sotāpatti-phala* – the *Fruit of Stream-entry* – is the experience of having abandoned the first three Fetters – 1. Personality view; 2. Attachment to precepts and practices; 3. Doubt regarding the possibility of, and the practices that lead to enlightenment. *Sakadāgāmi-magga* is known as the *Path of*

Once-return because with the experience of the fruit of this stage, *Sakadāgāmi-phala*, the Fetters of 4. Desire & 5. Aversion are irreversibly weakened resulting in human rebirth only once more. These Fetters of desire and aversion are further weakened with the practice of *Anāgāmi-magga* and fully abandoned with the realisation of *Anāgāmi-phala* – the *Fruit of No-return* – where, completely transcending desire and aversion, there is no return to birth in human or in any other physical form. With the final stage of the transcendent path – *Arahatta-magga* – the most subtle defilements of all concerning attachment to the purified heart and to existence itself, whether material or immaterial, are irreversibly weakened and with the realisation of *Arahatta-phala*, these final five Fetters of 6. Attachment to existence in rūpa-jhāna; 7. Attachment to existence in arūpa-jhāna; 8. Restlessness; 9. Conceit and 10. Ignorance are finally abandoned and the ultimate goal of Vimutti or Nibbāna is experienced. The *Arahant* has totally eradicated the mental defilements (kilesa) that bind the heart to the cycle of death and rebirth. As such, the Arahant has transcended birth, death and the suffering inherent in existence.

Enlightenment Factors — See *bodhi-pakkhiya dhammas*.

Five Aggregates — (Khandhas): The focuses of self-identity i.e. the material and mental constituents of experience which are identified with and attached to as one's self;
1. The physical body; 2. Feelings; 3. Memories and perceptions; 4. Thoughts and moods; 5. Consciousness.

Five Hindrances — (nivaraṇa): The psychological and emotional impediments to samādhi:
1. Desire; 2. Aversion; 3. Sloth & torpor; 4. Restlessness & agitation; 5. Doubt.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness — See *mindfulness*.

Four Noble Truths (ariya sacca): In the teaching on the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha presents spiritual practice as a reflection upon and a response to the reality of suffering and stress. The First Noble Truth (dukkha sacca) points towards the suffering inherent in existence and encourages deep contemplation on the themes of old age, sickness, death and how sorrow and grief are always waiting in the shadow of joy and happiness. The Second Noble Truth (samudaya sacca) points to the cause of suffering – craving and attachment, especially towards existence itself. The Third Noble Truth (nirodha sacca) is the understanding and realisation that with the complete cessation of craving, suffering ceases. On the highest level this refers to the experience of Nibbāna. The Fourth Noble Truth is the path of practice that leads to the realisation of Nibbāna (magga sacca) and is the practical consequence of a theoretical understanding of the first three Noble Truths, that is, through seeing suffering and its cause, and supported by the possibility of liberation, one seeks the way to freedom by developing the heart in virtue, samādhi and wisdom.

four requisites (paccaya): The basic supports of life – food, shelter, clothing and medicine.

gotrabhu ñāṇa Knowledge of 'crossing over' i.e. from delusion to enlightenment; the heart 'sees' Nibbāna for the first time and, from that moment onwards, realises that enlightenment is inevitable.

insight See *vipassanā*.

jāti Birth; rebirth

jhāna Advanced stages of samādhi otherwise known as 'absorption samādhi'. There are four levels of jhāna, each more refined and profound that the one which preceded it. In the Buddhist scriptures the First Jhāna is described in terms of five concomitant mental or jhāna factors: 1. Vitakka – initial application of mind i.e. the act of applying or 'lifting' awareness onto the meditation object; 2 Vicāra – sustained

application of mind i.e. the act of continued, unwavering focus upon the meditation object; 3. Pīti – spiritual rapture; 4. Sukha – profound bliss; deep, non-sensual happiness and contentment; 5. Ekaggatā – unified consciousness without subject-object duality.
The refinement of the succeeding Second to Fourth Jhānas are expressed in terms of the gradual abandoning or disappearance of the first four jhāna factors thus: In Second Jhāna vitakka and vicāra disappear; in Third Jhāna pīti falls away; in Fourth Jhāna sukha is abandoned, leaving only unified awareness in a state of perfect equanimity.

kalyāṇajana — A virtuous or noble person.

kamma — (Sanskrit = karma): Literally, 'action'. Kamma refers to those intentional actions of body, speech and mind that express a moral choice. The most important feature of kamma is its capacity to produce results directly corresponding to the ethical quality of the action that precipitated them. Whenever we perform a volitional action, this volition leaves an 'imprint' on the mental continuum (citta) where it remains as a stored-up potency. When this stored-up potency meets with conditions favourable for its maturation, it 'ripens', producing results that will either, determine one's experience of happiness and suffering in the present lifetime or, at the time of death, determine rebirth into another existence with whatever experience of joy or grief this future life may entail.
All living beings, by their intentional acts of body, speech and mind, create habits, tendencies and inclinations that lead on to a type of existence, or mode of being, in conformity with the nature of these habits, tendencies and inclinations. In other words, all living beings, through their actions of body, speech and especially mind, determine the conditions of their existence, acquiring the characteristics of devas, humans, animals and all other kinds of sentient life.

kammaṭṭhāna — Literally, 'the basis of (spiritual) practice' i.e. the methods and practice of meditation, this being the main occupation of one living a contemplative, religious life. Kammaṭṭhāna is of two

complementary and overlapping types; samatha or 'tranquillity' meditation and vipassanā or 'insight' meditation.

Samatha kammaṭṭhāna refers to the various methods or techniques of meditation that are aimed at calming and stilling the ceaseless flow of thoughts, moods and mental activity. There are numerous methods (forty in all) including mindfulness of breathing, the recollection of the Buddha, the meditation on the repulsiveness of the body or on its thirty-two parts and the contemplation of death. In the practice of mindfulness of breathing, all the inward focus of the mind is directed towards maintaining continuous awareness of the flow of in-and-out breathing to the exclusion of all other sensory experience, including thoughts, moods and memories. The recollection of the Buddha is usually simplified to the recitation of the mantra, 'Buddho'. The meditator focuses all their attention on silently repeating 'Buddho, Buddho, Buddho' to the exclusion of all other mental and physical distractions. The meditation on the repulsiveness of the body is to suppress lustful tendencies and initially proceeds by visualising the unattractive aspects of the body – the internal organs, saliva, mucus, excrement etc. – until the mind becomes absorbed into this theme to the exclusion of all other preoccupations. The contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body is carried out in a similar way but the aim of this meditation is to see the body as a mere conglomeration of impersonal parts and elements, which are ultimately without any abiding essence, self or soul. The contemplation of death proceeds by recollecting the inevitability and universality of old age, sickness and death. Frequent contemplation of this theme, far from creating a state of depressed apathy, inspires feelings of disenchantment with the world, which helps to direct the energies of body and mind towards living a life that will be for the genuine welfare and happiness of oneself and others. Eventually, through the practice of this or any of the other methods of samatha meditation, the energy of the mind will converge as a natural consequence of sustained inward focus and the state known as samādhi will arise.

Broadly speaking, vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna, or 'insight

meditation', involves the contemplation of the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self. However, at the most advanced stage, these are not exercises in discursive thinking, but rather, a non-discursive, inward directing of the mind's energy towards contemplating the body, feelings, mind-states and ultimately, the mind itself. Such an investigation is empowered through the practice of samādhi and indeed, it is only insight developed with and through the practice of samādhi that has the power to illuminate the essential reality of body and mind and so free the heart from greed, hatred and delusion.

karuṇā — Compassion (see *brahmavihāra*).

kāyagatā — Mindfulness 'focused on the body': A meditation practice that includes maintaining a constant awareness of the movements and postures of the body as well as contemplating its various parts (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).

kāyasaṅkhāra — Literally, the 'bodily formation' i.e. the physical body.

khandhas — See *Five Aggregates*.

khaṇika samādhi — A technical meditation term used to describe a momentary state of focused awareness (see *samādhi*).

kilesa — Mental defilements. The kilesas are the negative emotional and psychological forces deep within the hearts of all beings in saṃsāra and are the consequence of ignorance, craving and attachment as well as the conditioning cause for the future arising of these defilements, thus binding the heart even more tightly to this continuous cycle of suffering. The insidiousness of the kilesas is due to the fact that, in the eyes of the world, their varied manifestations are often viewed as positive, beneficial or even as sublime, spiritual forces e.g. righteous anger, pride and sexual lust. Therefore, the kilesas corrupt and distort the very thoughts and perceptions of beings which, in turn, pervert all actions of body and speech, so creating a restless and troubled world driven by the power of greed

	hatred and delusion.
Krooba Ajahn	(Thai) A title of great reverence reserved for an eminent teacher or meditation master and which often implies the realisation of enlightenment.
Luang Por / Pu	(Thai) Venerable or Reverend Father/Grandfather; a term of respect and affection reserved for senior/very senior monks.
magga	Path or Way (see *Enlightenment* and *Four Noble Truths*).
magga samaṅgī	The unification of the Noble Eightfold Path in the heart. The experience of magga samaṅgī precedes realisation of the stages of enlightenment (see *Enlightenment*). Magga samaṅgī describes the consummation of the practice of sīla, samādhi and paññā, where the karmic force of these perfected qualities is enough to uproot the defilements of ignorance, craving and attachment, permanently and irreversibly transforming the heart.
Mahāpurisa	The Great Being; an epithet of the Buddha.
Māra	The demonic personification of the negative emotional and psychological forces that oppose the development of virtue, samādhi and wisdom.
maraṇānussati	The contemplation or recollection of death (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
meditation	See *kammaṭṭhāna*.
mettā	Loving kindness (see *brahmavihāra*).
mindfulness	(sati): The mental act of recollection or constant awareness. When used as a method of developing samādhi and wisdom, this unbroken stream of awareness is focused on four areas, also known as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna): 1. The body, including its internal-external constituents, postures and movements; 2 The primary feelings or reactions towards sensory

experience i.e. pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent;
3. The **state of** the mind i.e. liberated or unliberated, focused or unfocused, enlightened or unenlightened etc;
4. The **qualities or states that affect** the mind such as greed, hatred and delusion, the hindrances to deep meditation and the wholesome states that condition the mind towards enlightenment such as happiness, energy, samādhi etc.

moha Delusion (see *kilesa*).

muditā Appreciation; joy at the success of others (see *brahmavihāra*).

Nibbāna (Sanskrit = *Nirvāna*): A transcendent state of Ultimate Peace; literally, 'Extinguished' i.e. the fires of greed, hatred and delusion (see *Enlightenment*).

Nimitta A vivid mental sign, image or vision that may arise during the course of deep meditation. Samādhi nimitta are of two different types representing different stages in the development of a meditation object:
1. Uggaha nimitta are mental images that arise in the preliminary stages of meditation and although they may be extremely vivid, their appearance cannot be controlled. The nature of the uggaha nimitta depends upon the meditation object and can be a ball of light in the case of mindfulness of breathing, a body part or a decomposing corpse in the case of asubha meditation or a physical sensation of warmth in the case of loving kindness meditation. However, the uggaha nimitta is purely a mental phenomenon arising as a natural consequence of samādhi directed towards a particular theme.
2. Paṭibhāga nimitta are 'fixed mental images' in the sense that that can be maintained in mind even with the eyes open and are as vivid as the real thing. The arising of these paṭibhāga nimitta imply proficiency in upacāra samādhi and can be used as either an expedient for jhāna or – because they can be manipulated i.e. expanded, enlarged, reduced or vanished – as a foundation for developing insight.
Due to the unusual nature of these nimitta, they can become a source of unwholesome fascination and ultimately distraction

from the work of developing wisdom and consequently, teachers of meditation always recommend caution and restraint when dealing with such phenomena.

Nine Insight Knowledges (vipassanāñāṇa): Nine stages of progressively deepening insight into impermanence, suffering and not-self. These insights have the effect of 'turning the heart away from the world' (see *saṃvega*) and are developed with and through the practice of samādhi. However, the arising of these Nine Insight Knowledges does not necessarily imply realisation of the stages of enlightenment.

Noble Eightfold Path The path of practice explained in terms of eight ideal or perfected qualities of body, speech and mind, the combined strength of which, bring the heart to enlightenment. These eight qualities are divided in three areas: The factors of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood represent the perfection of virtue and moral discipline; Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Samādhi represent the perfection of meditation; and finally, Right View and Right Intention represent the consummation of wisdom.

Noble Ones (Ariya Puggala; Ariyajana): Those who have realised any of the stages of enlightenment beginning with Stream-entry (see *Enlightenment*).

Pāli The scriptural language of Theravāda Buddhism.

pārami Spiritual maturity. This maturity refers to the inner strength or consummation of ten sublime virtues: 1.Generosity; 2. Moral discipline; 3. Renunciation; 4. Wisdom; 5. Heroic effort; 6. Patient endurance; 7. Truthfulness; 8.Resolution; 9. Loving kindness; 10. Equanimity.

Parinibbāna Final or Complete Nibbāna. With the realisation of enlightenment, the heart of a Buddha or an Arahant is completely free from rebirth-creating kamma i.e. actions of body, speech and mind motivated by the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. However, the physical body is a

	consequence of past kamma that must be endured until it reaches its natural end i.e. physical death. Parinibbāna is the term used in reference to the passing away of a Buddha or an Arahant who, 'like birds crossing the sky, leave no tracks behind'.
pariyatti	The study of the Buddha's Teachings; the Dhamma as practical theory.
paṭiccasamuppāda	Dependant origination; the conditional arising and ceasing of all phenomena. Paṭiccasamuppāda is a metaphysical statement of how the suffering inherent in existence, from birth to death and from death to rebirth, is a consequence of ignorance, craving and attachment and how, with the cessation of these defilements, Nibbāna is realised and existence along with suffering naturally comes to an end.
pīti	Spiritual rapture; feelings of deep, non-sensual bliss that arise when the mind is focused on a wholesome object, usually in deep meditation.
rāga	Sensual lust (see *kilesa*).
rains retreat	Every year from July to October – the time of the Asian rainy-season – there is a compulsory monastic retreat. A monk's seniority is determined by the number of these retreats he has completed.
Right Effort	(sammā vāyāmo): Acts of willpower or mental resolve. There are four Right Efforts: 1. The effort to prevent unarisen negative mental states from arising; 2. The effort to abandon negative mental states that have already arisen; 3. The effort to cultivate positive mental states that have not yet arisen; 4. The effort to further develop and bring to perfection the positive states of mind that have already arisen.
samādhi	Concentrated or focused awareness. Samādhi refers to both **the**

process of focusing awareness unwaveringly upon a single sensation or mind-object (see *kammaṭṭhāna*), and **the resultant state** of such concentrated attention. In this state, because the mind has become so still and concentrated, it possesses the purity and power to illuminate and clarify the essential reality of anything it focuses on. This is analogous to a microscope which, due to the power of its inward focus, clearly reveals that which lies hidden and beyond the scope of normal vision.

samaṇa — A seeker of ultimate peace; a renunciant who has made a deep commitment to spiritual practice.

Samatha kammaṭṭhāna — The methods and practice of tranquillity meditation (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).

saṃsāra — The cycle of birth, old age and death encompassing every realm of existence, even those of devas and brahma gods. The journey of a being in saṃsāra is fuelled by their volitional acts of body, speech and thought Such acts, under the defiling influence of ignorance, craving and attachment, only perpetuate the cycle and the suffering experienced therein. However, when these volitional acts are purified by the practice and perfection of sīla, samādhi and paññā, the power of defilement is broken and saṃsāra comes to an end.

samudaya — The Second Noble Truth; the cause of suffering i.e. taṇhā or craving (see Four Noble Truths).

saṃvega — The emotional counterpart to the insight or realisation that all conditions are subject to the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self (see *anicca – dukkha – anattā*). The various attempts to translate saṃvega as 'disenchantment', 'spiritual sadness' or 'profound sobriety', fail to capture the full depth of an emotion that is only really accessible to one who has experienced deep meditation and the wisdom that is the fruit of these profound states. It can be said that saṃvega provides the emotional impetus to compassion as it is only through the feeling of 'sober sadness' at the folly of those who live in ignorance or denial of these Three

	Characteristics that one is moved to urgently act, 'trembling for the welfare of all living beings'.
Saṅgha	The ordained communities of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis i.e. nuns and monks. When speaking of the wider community of 'Buddhists' i.e. including laywomen and laymen, the Buddha used the term 'parisā' meaning 'assembly'.
Saṅgho	A meditation mantra which, through constant mental repetition, can bring the mind to samādhi (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
saṅkhāra	Conditioned phenomena; that which is created from the coming together of various conditions. Although, by definition, saṅkhāra includes both physical and mental phenomena, it is usually used in reference to the fourth of the Five Aggregates i.e. thoughts, moods and mental states (see *Five Aggregates*).
saññā	Memory and perception. Saññā is the discriminative faculty of mind that labels and ascribes meaning to experience. However, due to the corrupting influence of ignorance, experience is always interpreted in terms of craving and attachment, that is, in terms of likes and dislikes or desire and aversion. Consequently, one's very perception of reality is distorted from the outset and acting, speaking and thinking on the basis of these defiled memories and perceptions only reinforces their reality and entrenches the heart deeper in delusion.
satipaṭṭhāna	The Four Foundations or Focuses of Mindfulness (see *mindfulness*).
Sāvaka Saṅgha	Those who heard the Dhamma directly from the Buddha and, through diligent practice, realised enlightenment. By extension, one who has realised any of the stages of enlightenment beginning with Stream-entry (see *Enlightenment*).
sense bases, *six*	The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body (including the brain) and mind
sense objects, six	Forms, sounds, odours, flavours, physical sensations and mind-objects i.e. thoughts and moods etc.

Seven Factors of Enlightenment	Seven profound mental qualities, the development of which, condition the heart towards enlightenment: 1. Mindfulness; 2. Investigation of Truth; 3.Energy; 4. Spiritual rapture; 5. tranquillity; 6. Samādhi; 7. Equanimity.
sīla	Ethically principled conduct of body, speech and mind, including the precepts and internal discipline necessary to maintain such standards of behaviour.
tadaṅga vimutti	Temporary liberation of the heart through insight into impermanence, suffering and not-self. The liberating insight which produces this experience has not yet reached the level of 'path and fruit' (see *Enlightenment*), but is profound enough that the heart is temporarily released from the Five Hindrances.
taṇhā	Craving; the Second Noble Truth (see *Four Noble Truths*).
Theravāda	Literally, 'Teaching of the Elders'; the dominant form of Buddhism found in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Sri Lanka.
Three Characteristics	(ti-lakkhaṇa): Impermanence, suffering and not-self (see *anicca – dukkha – anattā*).
Triple Gem	The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha.
upacāra samādhi	A technical meditation term used to describe a concentrated or focused state of awareness that is 'on the point of' samādhi (see *samādhi*).
upādāna	Clinging, attachment; especially to the view of a permanent self or soul.
upekkhā	Equanimity; perfect mental and emotional balance through non-attachment; skilfully recognising the limits of one's ability and letting go (see *brahmavihāra*).
vicāra	Sustained application of mind i.e. the act of continued, unwavering focus upon a meditation object (see *jhāna*).

Vimutti	Freedom; liberation (see *Enlightenment*).
vipassanā	Literally, 'clear-seeing'; insight and the methods of contemplation or investigation that lead to such profound knowledge.
Vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna	The methods and practice of insight meditation (see *kammaṭṭhāna*).
Vision of Dhamma	(Dhammacakkhu): A term synonymous with the realisation of the first stage of enlightenment or Sotāpatti-phala (see *Enlightenment*).
vitakka	Initial application of mind i.e. the act of applying or 'lifting' awareness onto a meditation object (see *jhāna*).
Wat Nong Pah Pong	(Thai) A forest monastery in northeast Thailand founded by Venerable Ajahn Chah.
wisdom	(paññā): Insight into impermanence, suffering and not-self. On a basic level wisdom can refer to knowledge and understanding gained through studying and memorising the teachings of the Buddha (suttamayapaññā). The practical efficacy of wisdom on this level can be determined by the extent to which, by reflecting on these teachings, the suffering and problems of life can be endured and reduced (cintamayapaññā). However, The highest level of wisdom is much more that mere book-learning and mindful reflection. The perfection of wisdom is non-verbal, non-discursive insight arising in the heart which, through the empowerment of deep samādhi, sees body and mind in terms of the three characteristics (bhāvanāmayapaññā). Only this type of discernment can provide the inner strength to permanently uproot ignorance, craving and attachment and result in liberation from the binding fetters of saṃsāra.

'Buddho' means 'One who is awakened to the Truth'. After the Buddha's enlightenment, then due to the power of His Great Compassion, rather than dwelling alone in the bliss of liberation, He went forth with loving kindness to teach the multitude, beginning with Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña, the first of the Sāvaka Saṅgha. This realisation and transmission of the Dhamma continues through our teacher and guide in the practice, Venerable Ajahn Chah, right into the present. I believe that if we diligently apply ourselves to his teachings, then peace and happiness will arise in our lives.

Venerable Ajahn Anan